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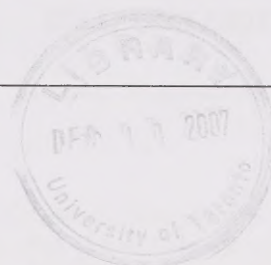
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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 28 November 2007

Mercredi 28 novembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 November 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 novembre 2007

The first day of the first session of the 39th Parliament of the province of Ontario commenced at 1400 pursuant to a proclamation of His Honour David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of the province.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the chamber and took his seat upon the throne.

Hon. David C. Onley (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I am commanded by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to state that he does not see fit to declare the causes of the summoning of the present Legislature of this province until a Speaker of this House shall have been chosen according to law, but tomorrow, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, His Honour will declare the causes of the calling of this Legislature.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

ELECTION OF SPEAKER

ÉLECTION DU PRÉSIDENT

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to call upon you to elect one of your number to preside over your deliberations as Speaker. Therefore, I ask for nominations for the office of Speaker.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I, Jean-Marc Lalonde, move, seconded by Laura Albanese, that Michael A. Brown, member for the electoral district of Algoma-Manitoulin, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.

Je, Jean-Marc Lalonde, propose, appuyé par Laura Albanese, que Michael A. Brown, député de la circonscription d'Algoma-Manitoulin, prenne le fauteuil en tant que Président de l'Assemblée législative.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Does the member for Algoma-Manitoulin accept the nomination?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I do.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Are there any further nominations?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I move, seconded by Mr. Brownell, that Mr. Peters, member for the electoral district of Elgin-Middlesex-London, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Does the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London accept the nomination?

Mr. Steve Peters: I do.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Are there any further nominations?

Mr. Kim Craitor: I, Kim Craitor, move, seconded by Bob Delaney, that David Zimmer, member for the electoral district of Willowdale, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Does the member for Willowdale accept the nomination?

Mr. David Zimmer: I do.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Are there any further nominations?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I, Kevin Flynn, the member for Oakville, move, seconded by Dave Levac, the member for Brant, that Lorenzo Berardinetti, member for the electoral district of Scarborough Southwest, do take the role of Chair.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Does the member for Scarborough Southwest accept the nomination?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Yes, I do.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Are there any further nominations?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I move, seconded by Laurie Scott, that Ted Arnott, member for the electoral district of Wellington-Halton Hills, do take the chair of the House as Speaker.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Does the member for Wellington-Halton Hills accept the nomination?

Mr. Ted Arnott: To serve the House, I will.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Are there any further nominations? There being none, I declare the nominations closed.

Please prepare the voting booths. The list of candidates will soon be posted in the voting booths. Once that is done, I'm going to ask you to please proceed away from the dais toward the main entrance. You have to go around behind the benches to the under-gallery area, where you will pick up your ballots from the committee clerks at the tables. They will be registering you and giving you a ballot. Then you will proceed here to wait for the direction of one of the table officers to take an empty ballot.

The balloting can begin. Please proceed that way around behind the benches.

1421

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Has every member who wishes to vote done so? The ballot is closed. Remove the ballot box.

When the count is complete, I will cause the bells to ring for five minutes, following which I will announce

either that a Speaker has been elected or that there is need for a subsequent ballot.

1438

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Honourable members, we have need of a second ballot. The following names, alphabetically, remain on the ballot: Mr. Arnott, Mr. Brown, Mr. Peters, Mr. Zimmer.

Prepare the voting booths.

1448

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Has every member who wishes to vote done so?

This ballot is closed. Remove the ballot box.

1504

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Honourable members, we have need of a third ballot. The following names, alphabetically, remain on the ballot: Mr. Arnott, Mr. Brown, Mr. Peters.

Prepare the voting booths.

1514

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Has every member who wishes to vote done so?

This ballot is closed. Remove the ballot box.

1528

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Honourable members, we have need of a fourth ballot. The following names, alphabetically, remain on the ballot: Mr. Brown, Mr. Peters. Prepare the voting booths.

1540

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): Has every member who wishes to vote done so?

This ballot is closed. Remove the ballot box.

1554

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): It is my honour to declare that the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London has been elected Speaker of the 39th Parliament of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mister Premier, leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, leader of the third party, members, I want to thank you very much for the honour and privilege that you have bestowed on me today. I say farewell to my Liberal caucus as I assume a non-partisan role, and I'm going to be extremely conscious of that, that as Speaker I don't represent any one party; I represent all 106 members of this House, and I thank you.

I want to take this opportunity especially to say thank you to Mike Brown. Mike, thanks for your work in this chair over the past two years. I wish you all the best. And to everyone else who participated—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): To Ted and to David and to Lorenzo, I say thank you as well. This was an opportunity for all of us to participate and play a role in the important parliamentary process that exists and has existed since virtually time immemorial. Thank you very much, all of you.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the House do now adjourn until 2 p.m. tomorrow, Thursday, November 29, 2007.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The fun begins.

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1558.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / procureur general
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa–Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Hon. / L'hon. Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor–Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York–Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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No. 2

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 November 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 novembre 2007

The House met at 1400.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the chamber and took his seat upon the throne.

Hon. David C. Onley (Lieutenant Governor): Pray be seated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): May it please Your Honour, the Legislative Assembly has elected me as their Speaker, though I am but little able to fulfill the important duties thus assigned to me.

If, in the performance of those duties, I should at any time fall into error, I pray that the fault may be imputed to me and not to the assembly, whose servant I am and who, through me, the better to enable them to discharge their duty to their Queen and country, hereby claim all their undoubted rights and privileges, especially that they have freedom of speech in their debates, access to your person at all reasonable times, and that their proceedings may receive from you the most favourable consideration.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, I am commanded by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to declare to you that he freely confides in the duty and attachment of the assembly to Her Majesty's person and government and, not doubting that the proceedings will be conducted with wisdom, temperance and prudence, he grants and upon all occasions will recognize and allow the constitutional privileges.

I am commanded also to assure you that the assembly shall have ready access to His Honour upon all suitable occasions, and that their proceedings, as well as your words and actions, will constantly receive from him the most favourable construction.

His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to open the session by reading the speech from the throne.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Hon. David C. Onley (Lieutenant Governor): Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislative Assembly, people of Ontario:

Today, it is my privilege to deliver this government's third speech from the throne.

This is a first for me, as Ontario's new Lieutenant Governor, and I want to take this opportunity to wish all members of this assembly well in your work.

And I want to extend a special welcome to those of you who are, like me, new to this assembly.

Quelles que soient ses lacunes, la démocratie parlementaire représente nombre des plus grands idéaux de l'humanité :

En particulier, nul n'est réputé être meilleur que son prochain, la loi prévaut clairement contre les lubies des dictateurs, le dialogue est préférable à la contestation et la sagesse collective a bien plus de valeur que l'impulsivité d'une seule personne.

Whatever its flaws, parliamentary democracy represents many of humankind's highest ideals.

The notion that no person is deemed to be better than his or her neighbour, the rule of law is clearly superior to the whim of dictators, debate is preferable to distemper, and collective wisdom has far more value than individual impulse.

May you be inspired by these ideals—and by the work done by those who came before you.

Since the last speech from the throne, nine former MPPs have passed away.

I ask you to remember Fred Burr, Doug Ford, Anthony Grande, George A. Kerr, Bert Lawrence, Robert MacQuarrie, Robert Mitchell, Ian Scott and Mel Swart.

The people of Ontario are grateful to them for dedicating a portion of their lives to our democracy.

And we are inspired by those who risk their lives in defence of the principles that sustain that democracy.

I speak of the brave Canadians who are standing up for freedom today in Afghanistan, and those who have fallen in its defence in conflicts throughout our history.

Together, we pledge that their sacrifice, and the sacrifice of all of our veterans—commemorated recently at Remembrance Day and by Ontario's Tribute to the Fallen, and enshrined permanently along Ontario's Highway of Heroes—will not be forgotten.

As well, we recall the sacrifice and service of our police, firefighters and emergency workers, who put their lives on the line each day to protect Ontario families.

Finally, we recognize the efforts of the people you have pledged to serve—the people of Ontario.

Children, whose wonder knows no bounds.

Parents, whose love knows no limits.

Seniors, whose work built this province.

The volunteers who take on the thankless tasks, the health care workers who comfort the sick, the educators who share their knowledge, the entrepreneurs who take the risks, the employers who provide the jobs, and the workers who lift us all up.

The hard-working men and women of Ontario who, together, make this the finest province in the best country in the world.

While it is as beautiful as any of its sisters to the east or west, Ontario knows its true grandeur lies not in its landscapes or lakes, but in the diversity of its people.

Our people speak every language, embrace every culture, and have ties to every corner of the globe, but they share a common goal—to build a better life for themselves and their families, predicated on a belief in opportunity for all.

From our proud First Nations to our courageous new arrivals, Ontarians seek to build a strong and caring society, sustained by a strong and prosperous economy.

Les Ontariennes et Ontariens sont des gens positifs, conscients des défis qui les attendent, mais optimistes au sujet des possibilités qui s'offrent à eux.

Votre gouvernement partage cet optimisme.

Il partage vos objectifs.

Et il comprend que, dans les quatre prochaines années, vous souhaitiez aller de l'avant à la manière de l'Ontario : en travaillant, en bâtissant et en rêvant ensemble.

Ontarians are a positive people, sober-minded about the challenges before us, yet optimistic about the opportunities available to us.

Your government shares that optimism.

It shares your goals.

And it understands that, over the next four years, you want to move forward the Ontario way: by working and building and dreaming, together.

And that is why it is so committed to improving the knowledge and skills of our people.

When we improve the quality of public education, when we provide our young people in particular with the skills they need to succeed, we get the best workers, who land the best jobs, who in turn build the strongest economy, which funds everything we want to do together.

But this virtuous circle encompasses far more than material gain.

Idéalement, l'école apprend aux enfants que nous sommes solidaires les uns des autres, que nous sommes responsables de nous-mêmes, de notre famille et de notre collectivité, que nous sommes tous liés les uns aux autres et que chacun a la responsabilité de veiller sur l'autre, de l'aider et d'essayer de bâtir quelque chose de plus grand que soi.

At its very best, education instils in our children the understanding that we are all in this together, that they must take responsibility for themselves, their families and their communities, that we are all connected, and that we share a responsibility to look out for one another, to help one another and to build something greater than ourselves.

Ontarians sent a clear message this past fall: They want our children to come together, learn together and grow together.

So your government is committed to making publicly funded education the very best it can be.

It will continue to work with parents and educators to improve student achievement, ensure more and more of our young people graduate from high school, and make it possible for more of them to keep learning beyond high school in a university, college or apprenticeship program.

Your government will strive to ensure still more of our children meet the provincial standard in reading, writing and math, so that we are assuming our shared responsibility to equip them to succeed in the hyper-competitive global economy of the 21st century, and to measure their progress.

If our children are to succeed in the knowledge economy, ours must be a learning society.

And so your government will work to phase in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

Progress towards that goal has already begun, with the appointment this week of an early learning adviser.

Your government knows Ontario can take on the world and win, but only if every Ontarian is at his or her best, and every child can reach his or her full potential.

So your government will work to reduce the barriers facing students in at-risk communities by dramatically expanding the successful Pathways to Education initiative.

To ensure every student can get help when they need help, your government will make expanded homework help available online and after school.

Your government will work to improve graduation rates in our high schools and ensure more young people keep learning beyond high school.

To ensure higher education is more accessible, your government will introduce a special distance grant for students from the north and remote areas who must commute long distances.

To ensure it is more affordable, your government will deliver a new textbook and technology grant of \$300 for university and college students to help them get started each year at school.

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And to ensure that our publicly funded schools have the resources they need to help our students succeed, your government will continue to improve the funding formula, investing an additional \$3.1 billion annually by 2011 and requiring that the formula be reviewed by 2010.

The true test of this generation's leadership will be the next generation's success.

And your government will invest in that success, every day.

Ontarians are capable of taking the long view and focusing on the task at hand at the same time.

So your government also has a plan for today's economy—a plan for today's jobs.

Les bons emplois bien rémunérés contribuent à financer nos écoles et nos hôpitaux et à nourrir nos familles.

Mais ils font beaucoup plus que cela.

Ils permettent aux parents, à la fin d'une bonne journée de travail, de retrouver leurs enfants le cœur

rempli de fierté; ils permettent aux gens d'envisager l'avenir avec confiance.

Good, high-paying jobs fund our schools and hospitals, and put food on our families' tables.

But they do even more than that.

They allow a mom or dad to go home after a day's work and look into the eyes of their child with pride; they allow a community to look to the future with confidence.

So your government is working with business and labour to attract, retain and create good, high-paying jobs for Ontario families and communities.

Like Ontarians, your government is clear-eyed about the challenges posed by a high dollar, high commodity prices and the always intense—and sometimes intensely unfair—competition faced by our manufacturers, foresters and farmers.

At the same time, it is optimistic that Ontario is uniquely equipped to succeed in a world that values hard work, high productivity and relentless innovation.

In sectors ranging from financial services to biotechnology to digital media and other advanced technologies, Ontarians are experiencing growth that far outpaces that of our closest competitors.

As the finance minister will outline in his upcoming fall economic statement, the bottom line is maintaining a strong fiscal position for Ontario supported by a growing economy that is as strong and resilient as Ontarians themselves.

The proof of that is the fact that Ontario has 420,000 more good, high-paying jobs now than it had just four years ago, and Ontario has the lowest level of unemployment in five years.

Your government will follow the five-point economic plan endorsed by Ontarians this past fall.

It includes:

(1) Major investment in the education and skills of our people.

(2) Keeping our taxes competitive, which includes phasing out the capital tax.

(3) Supporting innovation and the good, high-paying jobs of the future through, for example, the new \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund.

(4) Accelerating the largest investment in the province's infrastructure in 50 years, including Move Ontario 2020, a historic expansion of public transit.

(5) Forming key partnerships, such as those formed through the automotive investment strategy, which is helping to leverage more than \$7 billion in new auto investment, and the new next generation jobs fund, which will create new good, high-paying jobs by developing new clean and green technologies.

Your government will deliver an agriculture risk management program to help our grain and oilseed farmers cope with internationally subsidized competitors, increase support for the rural economic development fund by 50%, encourage more people and businesses to buy food grown here in Ontario, and continue to support supply management.

It will help the tourism sector by conducting a comprehensive competitiveness study, increasing funding for festivals and events around Ontario, and expanding marketing initiatives to promote Ontario destinations.

Your government will work with manufacturers to support new and advanced technologies, and with the forestry industry through initiatives like the forest sector prosperity fund.

What's more, your government will work, through Employment Ontario, to ensure there is more help for displaced workers and that help is delivered faster, with expanded training and support initiatives.

Your government will bolster regional economic expansion and jobs in northern Ontario by increasing the northern heritage fund to \$100 million, and in eastern Ontario by creating a new eastern Ontario development fund.

Your government understands that we are all in this together, and even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many.

So it will continue to press the federal government to be fair to Ontario when it comes to fiscal policy and to become a true partner with Ontario, especially when it comes to fairness in employment insurance and support for sectors facing challenges.

In particular, Ontario calls on the federal government to help keep goods and people moving by giving municipalities the equivalent of one percentage point of the goods and services tax to invest in infrastructure and public transit.

Your government understands that communities are engines of economic growth and hotbeds of innovation. Your government will do its share by building on the progress it has already made in working with municipalities.

The government will upload Ontario drug benefit costs in 2008 and then begin uploading disability support program costs in 2009—costs that had been downloaded by the previous government. And it will continue to work through the provincial-municipal review to put our cities and towns on a firm financial footing.

Pour que notre économie et notre société prospèrent réellement, il faut que chacun d'entre nous mette à contribution toutes ses capacités.

Pour que tous aient des occasions de réussir.

Et non pour que certains deviennent plus prospères tandis que d'autres s'appauvrissent.

To truly succeed as an economy and as a society, we need everyone at his or her best.

That is what opportunity for all is all about.

It does not mean more prosperity for some and more poverty for others.

Study after study, including a report from the United Way of Greater Toronto just this week, has underlined that we all share a responsibility to work towards lifting more families out of poverty. Your government will continue to assume its responsibility to provide these families with better opportunities.

A new cabinet committee will begin work developing poverty indicators and targets and a focused strategy for making clear-cut progress on reducing child poverty.

The strategy includes a plan that would provide dental benefits to low-income families, and builds on measures already in progress. These include boosting the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, increasing child care spaces and providing more affordable housing. Your government will also fully implement the new Ontario child benefit, raising it to \$1,100 per child.

Opportunity for all means opportunity that is accessible to all.

During its first mandate, your government worked with Ontarians with disabilities, Ontarians of tremendous strength and determination, to introduce the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

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During its second mandate, it will work with all Ontarians to phase in positive changes made possible by the act to improve and expand accessibility throughout the province.

Just as we can measure an economy's progress by how it treats those who have fallen behind, we can measure a society's depth by how well it treats those who have fallen ill.

Nous pouvons être fiers du régime d'assurance-santé de la province, qui permet de fournir des soins à toutes les Ontariennes et à tous les Ontariens en fonction de leurs besoins, et non de leurs ressources financières ou de leur situation sociale, un régime dont on peut se prévaloir simplement parce qu'on est citoyen de la province.

Toutefois, cette fierté doit favoriser le progrès et non l'entraver. Cela est particulièrement important compte tenu du vieillissement de la population et du fait que la capacité de la médecine de prévenir, de diagnostiquer et de traiter les maladies ne cesse de progresser.

We can be proud in Ontario of a system of medicare that treats all people on the basis of need—not because of the size of your bank account or your station in life, but simply because you are one of us.

But that pride must also fuel progress, not stand in the way of it, especially when our population is growing older, and the capacity of medical science to prevent, diagnose and treat illness and disease is growing every day.

When a child is diagnosed with diabetes, when a father suffers a heart attack, when a mother faces breast cancer, when a family rushes to the emergency ward, we share a responsibility as Ontarians to respond with compassion, care and commitment.

Your government—all Ontarians, in fact—have responded by training more doctors, hiring more nurses and reducing wait times for key procedures, but there is much more to do.

To ensure that more Ontarians get the care they need when they need it, your government will expand its progress on wait times to more services such as emergency room visits, children's surgery and general surgery.

To help more Ontarians receive that care closer to home, your government will strive to ensure that 500,000 more Ontarians have access to improved family health care from doctors, nurses and other health care professionals, working together.

Your government will hire 9,000 more nurses, work towards its goal to have 70% of nurses working full time, guarantee jobs for new nursing graduates, invest in healthy work environments for nurses, and establish 25 more nurse-led clinics.

Your government believes we need to do more to help seniors who want to stay in their homes. It will broaden the services available to seniors through home care and provide a caregiver grant to those caring for elderly family members.

For those who require more assistance, it will take action to improve the level of care in long-term-care homes by building 35,000 long-term-care beds over 10 years, and 2,000 new nurses will provide care in long-term-care homes.

And because more Ontarians are struggling with diabetes, your government will introduce a new comprehensive diabetes strategy.

Your government will do more to prevent illness by introducing legislation that would ban trans fats from all school cafeterias, prescribe a healthier menu that conforms to the Canada Food Guide and create an Ontario fitness challenge program to fight childhood obesity.

Your government understands that we cannot claim to own the air or the water or other precious resources.

We simply hold them in trust for our children and their children.

Ici, sur la seule planète connue où la vie est possible, nous nous devons de protéger ce qui assure notre survie.

Nous savons que les défis qu'il faut relever sont de taille, voire planétaires, mais cela n'empêche pas les Ontariennes et Ontariens de vouloir faire leur part.

Here, on the only planet we know of that sustains life, we have an obligation to preserve that which sustains us.

We know the challenges are large, even global, but Ontarians want to do their part.

Your government will move forward with Ontario's plan to combat climate change by working towards meeting Ontario's goal of reducing the emissions that contribute to climate change by 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% below by 2020, and 80% below by 2050.

It will achieve this, in part, by making our energy cleaner and greener, moving forward with the province's first long-term electricity plan in a generation.

Your government will replace coal, double renewables, double conservation and modernize our nuclear capacity.

Ontarians understand that we don't have to choose between the environment and the economy—that in fact, we can grow our economy by making it greener.

There are good, high-paying jobs that will go to the places that develop the most innovative green technologies, including the next generation of clean cars, and

Ontario will work to seize those opportunities through our next generation jobs fund.

Your government has already begun work on Move Ontario 2020, the largest transit expansion in Canadian history.

Your government will introduce tough new toxic reduction legislation that would reduce pollution. It would inform and protect Ontarians from toxic chemicals in the air, water, land and consumer products. New legislation would also ban the cosmetic use of pesticides in our cities and our towns.

Your government will also move to protect our water and natural areas that make Ontario a beautiful place to live.

It will take strong action to protect Lake Simcoe's water quality for future generations.

And it will work with northern and native communities in Ontario's far north to implement a plan that protects the boreal forest—a key contributor in the fight against climate change.

Ontarians care about our planet.

And we love our country.

Les Ontariennes et Ontariens sont des Canadiens énergiques.

Nous sommes des patriotes.

Avec nos compatriotes canadiens, nous avons bâti un pays dont nous sommes fiers de dire qu'il est le nôtre et, parallèlement, une province dont nous sommes fiers de dire que nous y sommes chez nous.

Ontarians are strong Canadians.

We are patriots.

Working with our fellow Canadians, we have built a country that we are proud to call ours, and a province that we are proud to call home, at the same time.

And we continue to work together with our fellow Canadians, from coast to coast to coast, and in countless ways, for the betterment of all Canadians, including Canadians living in Ontario.

But the foundation of that work together must be basic fairness for all Canadians, including Canadians here in Ontario.

And your government will continue to speak up—and stand up—for Ontario when that basic fairness is undermined.

It stood up, for example, when newcomers to Ontario were not receiving their fair share of services.

It stands now with Ontarians who deserve their fair share when it comes to employment insurance, and support for our manufacturers, forestry workers and farmers.

And it will continue to stand up to the federal government when it comes to fair representation in the House of Commons.

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An Ontarian is a proud Canadian, no less proud than other Canadians, and certainly no less entitled to the same representation in Parliament.

It's important that we work together to keep our communities safe. To do that, we must be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime.

Your government will continue to push the federal government to honour its commitment to provide an additional 1,000 police officers in Ontario, just as this government delivered 1,000 new police officers during its first mandate.

Your government will stand up for Ontario because we love Canada, because we understand a strong Ontario means a stronger Canada.

A throne speech traditionally paints the big picture—laying out plans for the next session or mandate.

So not every initiative could be included within this one frame. There is more your government will do.

And it is traditional to use a wide brush, to paint with broad strokes, with the broadest of them all reserved for the conclusion of the speech.

Your government, however, chooses to end this speech by speaking directly to one group in particular.

They do not constitute the largest group or the most powerful.

They are, however, and profoundly, the first people to call this place home.

This government seeks to forge a stronger, more positive relationship with Ontario's First Nations.

Creating a better life for our aboriginal communities and opportunities that all can access is exemplified by a small agency serving aboriginal youth. 7th Generation Image Makers employs and trains native youth to create commercial murals.

This company and Adam Garnet Jones, its coordinator, who is with us today in the gallery, are a powerful symbol of what we in Ontario all want to see: far greater opportunities for aboriginal youth in our province.

As a part of the respected Native Child and Family Services of Toronto, the youth program run by Adam is a business and an example of excellence. It is a living example, in fact, of what your government hopes to accomplish in this mandate: education, training, looking to the future, creativity, respect and pride in aboriginal arts, culture and heritage, and greater job opportunities for aboriginal people.

Certes, votre gouvernement n'est pas le premier à vouloir nouer des liens plus étroits avec nos Premières Nations.

Mais il est peut-être le premier à avoir en sa possession un point de départ aussi prometteur; je veux parler du Rapport de la Commission d'enquête sur l'Ipserwash.

Dans un premier temps, votre gouvernement a mis sur pied cette commission. Dans un deuxième temps, il a créé un ministère autonome des Affaires autochtones.

Your government, to be sure, is not the first government to seek a better relationship with our First Nations.

But it is, perhaps, the first to have in its possession such a positive road map for progress—the Ipserwash Inquiry Report.

If striking that inquiry was the first step, your government has now taken the second, by establishing an independent Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

Ontario will work with you, through the new minister, to act on the report's recommendations.

Of all the people in Ontario, you have perhaps the deepest sense of our history.

So you know that Ontario cannot do this overnight, and Ontario cannot do this alone.

Ontario will continue its efforts to encourage and work with the federal government to accelerate the settlement of land claims.

But Ontario will work with you, with respect and in collaboration, to improve the quality of life and expand economic opportunities for all aboriginal peoples in our province, both on- and off-reserve.

This progress is central to the goal all Ontarians share—to provide opportunity for all, to build a better quality of life for all, to move our province forward, and to do so the Ontario way.

By working and building and dreaming, together.

Thank you.

Singing of O Canada.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

Prayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that to prevent mistakes, I have obtained a copy of the speech from the throne, which I will now read.

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AN ACT TO PERPETUATE AN ANCIENT PARLIAMENTARY RIGHT LOI VISANT À PERPÉTUER UN ANCIEN DROIT PARLEMENTAIRE

Mr. McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 1, An Act to perpetuate an ancient parliamentary right / *Projet de loi 1, Loi visant à perpétuer un ancien droit parlementaire.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Following long-standing tradition, the first bill introduced in the Legislature involves an initiative not mentioned in the speech from the throne. I am pleased to introduce this bill. What I am doing, this practice, signifies the assembly's independence from the crown and the collective right of members to address the Legislature's priorities attending other business.

MOTIONS

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor to this House be taken into consideration on Monday, December 3, 2007.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. of the clock on Monday, December 3, 2007.

The House adjourned at 1454.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York–Sud–Weston	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough–Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / procureur general
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud–Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke–Centre	
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley–Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton–Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldeep (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa–Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Hon. / L'hon. Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor–Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York–Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice-premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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First Session, 39th Parliament

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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 3 December 2007

Lundi 3 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 3 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 3 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2008, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ELECTIONS

Mr. Bill Murdoch: First, I want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your election. I know you will do a good job in your new role and provide appropriate support for all members in the House.

Having said that, I would like to bring to your attention a pressing issue and ask for your assistance in getting to the bottom of it. I would like to ask you to form an all-party committee that would lead a performance audit of Elections Ontario.

In my 17 years in provincial politics, I've never before seen or experienced such a poorly run election. I do not know how or why the problem started, but I certainly know that people in my riding did their best to deal with the problem. Scores of voters were given wrong polling station addresses. There was a couple from Warton who were told to vote in two different spots. One was told to drive 30 kilometres away to vote. She was actually being told to vote in a different riding. Another couple was sent to three different polling stations because no one could figure out just where they were supposed to vote. Needless to say, after the third trip to the polling station they gave up.

It's no coincidence then that Ontario had the poorest voter turnout rate in provincial history. Only 52.8% of eligible voters bothered to vote in the last election. I believe that, under your guidance, this committee would be able to travel the province, hear from some of these voters and make recommendations so this foul-up never repeats.

If it is not possible for you to do this, Mr. Speaker, then please advise what else can be done to rectify the decisions of Elections Ontario. It is time to ensure there are no surprises in the next round of elections: municipal, provincial or federal. Voting is our basic democratic right, and Elections Ontario should do everything in its power to ensure that it's a seamless process for all of us, rural and urban.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: First of all, I want to start off congratulating you on your position as Speaker. I know you'll do a fair and equitable job for all sides here, and I wish you all the best during the next four years.

Today I rise to discuss a very important issue affecting a number of residents in my community. Many people suffer from various ailments, such as Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and prostatitis, that require frequent usage of washroom facilities. These people use public facilities, such as in the TTC subway system, for many daily activities. Currently in my riding of Scarborough Southwest, there are three subway stations—Victoria Park, Warden and Kennedy—with no public facilities.

People with these conditions suffer considerably. The constant pressures and strains such afflictions put on their lives by having to deal with the day-to-day effects that such conditions produce are only exacerbated by the fact that not all public facilities, such as the TTC subway system, are equipped with public washrooms that can accommodate these people, because the Ontario building code requires that washrooms are only required at the end of a subway line and not throughout the subway line.

Over the past two years, the McGuinty government has given the city of Toronto millions of dollars for capital upgrades to the TTC. Some of this money has been dedicated to the expansion of subway services to York University, ending in Vaughan region. As a result, I strongly encourage the TTC to put some of these capital dollars aside for the construction of public washrooms at every TTC subway stop, and I stand today in support of this statement.

LICENCE PLATE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr. John Yakabuski: Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate you on your election.

I also want to take this opportunity to welcome Jim Bradley into his new role as transportation minister. He's

a fine gentleman. I expect he will do a great job in that portfolio.

One of his first acts should be to give some direction to the people who make up the personalized licence plate review committee. It is clear that the folks who approve these personalized plates have a different thought process than their predecessors. Reverend Ingrid Condie-Bennett, a United Church minister and constituent of mine, has twice been turned down by the committee for her request for personalized plates, once for "HOLYHSLR" and again for "THE REV2."

As it turns out, this committee is not only turning down requests that have a Christian connotation; they are also on a witch hunt to recall those that were okayed by those reasonable souls who used to approve such plates in the past. Reverend Joanne Sorrell of Whitby found that out when she tried to replace her rusty "REV JO" plates issued to her 19 years ago. One of the reasons given for those ridiculous measures was that the plates could be offensive to others. I would suggest that the minister refer to the many letters and opinion columns written since this whole thing began. What people find offensive is the attitude and actions of this committee, not the plates themselves.

Minister, stop this insanity now. There are real issues and priorities facing this province that require your attention. Surely, taking away the right of an ordained minister to use their proper title on a licence plate isn't one of them.

URANIUM MINE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I draw the assembly's attention to the presence of Donna Dillman in the members' gallery. Today marks day 57 of a hunger strike she has embarked upon as part of the struggle to stop a uranium mine proposal near Sharbot Lake. Close to a week ago, she moved this protest to Queen's Park. She is acting on behalf of a coalition of eastern Ontario residents and groups who for months have been calling on the provincial government to take measures against this proposal, a proposal that is contemptuous of First Nations' rights and a harbinger of things to come if the nuclear power lobby succeeds in this province.

To date, the government, through its inaction, has been complicit in the strife that this proposal has caused. The Ardoch Algonquin First Nation has repeatedly pointed out that the provincial government has failed to consult with them about uranium exploration on their traditional lands.

In the Premier's comments on this matter, he said, "In an ideal world, I would shut down our nuclear generation overnight, but 50% of our electricity now comes from nuclear-fired generation." He sidestepped the fact that his electricity plan for this province is a nuclear plan that will perpetuate the demand for uranium. Frankly, if he continues, his plan will precipitate more struggles of this nature down the road and many more activists coming to this Legislature to defend their communities and our environment.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Dave Levac: Mr. Speaker, I want to offer my personal congratulations to you as you sit in the chair and deliberate in this wonderful place. Congratulations.

November 14 was World COPD Day. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease is a long-term chronic respiratory disease and is characterized by chronic airflow limitations, shortness of breath, and persistent coughing and wheezing. This disease makes daily normal activities we take for granted very difficult to perform.

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The Lung Association of Canada always asks us to support World COPD Day by dressing in red. I just know that we all did something of that nature.

While NHL great and COPD spokesman Dennis Hull reminds us of the seriousness of the disease, more needs to be done to educate the public about this terrible affliction. Try breathing through a straw for one minute. You will get the picture. It is a silent and unknown killer in Canada. In fact, only 13% of the population of Canada have heard of COPD. While coronary heart disease and stroke death rates have declined by an average of 60%, COPD death rates have risen by 163%. According to the World Health Organization, COPD is the fourth-leading cause of death worldwide, on a par with AIDS and HIV. More than three million people die from this disease every year. The hospitalization costs alone for the riding of Brant were nearly \$3 million in 2005.

Enough said about the statistics. I would like to end by saying, folks, remember to support World COPD Day next year and also to remember that COPD sufferers may be breathless, but they need not be helpless as well.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Congratulations on your election, Mr. Speaker.

We all remember the summer of 2005. It was labelled the "summer of the gun." Dalton McGuinty and his team blamed everyone in sight for the 79 homicides that took place that year in Ontario's largest municipality, Toronto. The McGuinty government made one photo op announcement after another following the summer of the gun. You will remember that 2005 ended with the Yonge Street slaying of an innocent young woman. All of these photo ops, all of these glamorous announcements by the Premier, Attorney General and community safety minister have failed. Yesterday, Toronto surpassed the 79 homicides of 2005 with the slaying of a 16-year-old Scarborough boy.

There are still 28 days left in this year. How many others will die? How many more records will be broken? The McGuinty government is now in its fifth year—there is no one else to blame. It is time for the McGuinty government to get tough on crime. It is time that the city of Toronto no longer unnecessarily bury its young. It is time for Dalton McGuinty to press federal Liberals to stop

delaying tactics on good Harper legislation, tough-on-crime legislation. It is time for provincial leadership on community safety.

RIDING OF STORMONT-DUNDAS— SOUTH GLENGARRY

Mr. Jim Brownell: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying it's great to be back and I congratulate you on your election.

On October 10, the people of Ontario looked at the many accomplishments of the McGuinty Liberals over the past four years and voted for continued strong leadership. In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, I was proud to deliver real change and positive results through my first term. Working with local leaders, I made sure that many of the important initiatives neglected by the Conservatives in the 1990s were addressed. We have been successful in delivering revitalized infrastructure, redeveloped hospitals, re-energized economic development and renewed hope in our communities. We have come a long way in four short years, leading eastern Ontario into an all-encompassing renaissance. Now it is time to continue building towards a positive future.

I encourage everyone to come and experience the abundant opportunities in my riding. If you are a business looking to expand, SD&G has the location, skilled workers and competitive property values. If you are a medical graduate looking for a community in which to establish a practice, SD&G has state-of-the-art equipment in redeveloped hospitals. If you are a family looking to settle, SD&G has an unsurpassed quality of life and countless historical and natural attractions. If you are looking for a vacation destination, from snowmobile trails in the winter to beaches in the summer, as well as museums, parks and golf, we've got what you're looking for.

I encourage you all to contact me to learn more or to come and visit Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry directly. We have it all.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise in the House today to speak about the action we are taking to ensure we have healthy and green communities. We have taken action to reduce our environmental footprint by investing in public transit, reducing emissions from coal plants, promoting renewable energy, and supporting research and innovation. Under the McGuinty Liberals, Ontario went from last to first in renewable energy generation Canada. And while we have reversed a decade of NDP and PC cuts to energy conservation and put Ontario at the forefront of North America, there is more important work to be done.

We are hard at work in all corners of Ontario fighting climate change. We have an ambitious \$17.5-billion rapid transit plan for the GTA and Hamilton, we have laid out ambitious emission reduction targets and we are providing rebates and tax incentives to buy energy-effi-

cient products. We are moving forward in our commitment to phase out energy being produced from coal, and we are banning the use of cosmetic pesticides.

We are taking action to make our communities cleaner and greener for our families and their children. They deserve a healthy society—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

POVERTY

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker, and on behalf of the city of Mississauga, congratulations on your election.

I rise to talk about the initiatives Ontario is taking to reduce poverty. This is as much an issue in communities like Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville as in any other area of our province.

One of the steps that our government is taking to alleviate poverty is the Ontario child benefit that will benefit an estimated 1.3 million Ontario children and 600,000 lower-income families. While the Harris-Eves Tories decimated social assistance programs and contributed directly to child poverty by slashing welfare payments by almost 22%, this government recognizes that Ontario can only be truly prosperous when we all share in the same opportunity. That's why Ontario is taking strong steps to help low-income families and combat poverty in our province. We have raised the minimum wage every year while in government; we will continue to bring it up to more than \$10 per hour. We have increased social assistance and ODSP, and we are enhancing child care.

Not only that, but we're building on our first-term successes in education and in Best Start. We'll appoint an early learning adviser regarding funding for full-day preschool. While the previous NDP government scrapped the Ontario child income program and presided over the doubling of welfare rolls, our government is taking real measures to ensure that no one is left behind.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that Mr. Runciman, member for the electoral district of Leeds-Grenville, is recognized as the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As well, I would like the members to welcome Mr. Bud Wildman, the former member for Algoma from the 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments. Welcome.

VISITOR

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would also like members to recognize and

welcome a member of the Hispanic Canadian Congress, Mr. Ramon Hernandez.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We welcome Mr. Hernandez.

I remind the member that that is not a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I'd also like to recognize Cindy Shcherban, the vice-president of provincial programs, and Carol Madeley, the director of respiratory health programs at the Ontario Lung Association, who are reinforcing the importance of World COPD Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

Again, I remind the member that that is not a point of order.

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TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that since the House last met, the following documents and papers respecting the Legislative Assembly were tabled:

—on Tuesday, June 5, 2007, the report of the review of expense claims covering the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007, pursuant to the Cabinet Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' Expenses Review and Accountability Act, 2002, from the Office of the Integrity Commissioner;

—on Monday, June 18, 2007, the Auditor General's Review of the 2007 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances;

—on Wednesday, June 27, 2007, the annual report of the Ombudsman for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007;

—on Thursday, June 28, 2007, the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2006-07;

—on Friday, June 29, 2007, the eighth annual report from the lobbyists registration office with respect to the administration of the Lobbyist Registration Act, 1998, for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007;

—on Tuesday, July 10, 2007, the projected costs for the 2007 provincial general election and referendum by the Chief Electoral Officer;

—on Wednesday, July 25, 2007, the annual report of the Integrity Commissioner for the period April 1, 2006 to March 31, 2007;

—on Monday, July 30, 2007, a copy of the order in council made pursuant to subsection 23(6)(b) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, appointing Lynn Morrison as the Acting Integrity Commissioner, effective July 30, 2007, until a new Integrity Commissioner is appointed under subsection 23(2) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, and revoking, as of July 30, 2007, order in council number 1702/2001 dated June 27, 2001;

—on Wednesday, November 7, 2007, a request by the member for Welland, Mr. Kormos, to Lynn Morrison, acting Integrity Commissioner, for an opinion pursuant to section 30(1) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the Honourable Michael A. Brown, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention, together with statutory declaration from Mr. Kormos in the above-noted matter.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FAIRNESS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AND HEALTH INSURANCE), 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR LES FAMILLES DES MILITAIRES (NORMES D'EMPLOI ET ASSURANCE-SANTÉ)

Mr. McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide reservist leave and the Health Insurance Act to eliminate the waiting period for military families / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin de prévoir un congé pour réservistes et la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin d'éliminer la période d'attente pour les familles des militaires.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Premier for a short statement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I choose to speak to this momentarily at the time of ministerial statements.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to permit the orders for second and third reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide reservists leave and the Health Insurance Act to eliminate the waiting period for military families, to be called immediately and that a representative of each recognized party will speak for up to five minutes on the motion for second reading of the bill, after which the Speaker shall put the question without further debate or amendment; and that the question be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment; and that, in the case of any division, the bells be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there consent? Agreed.

It has been agreed to, but just to confirm that each party will have up to five minutes to speak to this.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A few weeks ago, on Remembrance Day, several members of the House gathered at the veterans' memorial on the front lawn of the Legislature. The day before, we honoured the families of our soldiers who had recently lost their lives in Afghanistan by presenting them with Ontario's Tribute to the Fallen.

Today, I would like to inform the House about our continuing commitment to support the men and women in the Canadian Forces who today serve their country with such courage and valour. Canadian Forces members serve in dangerous commissions abroad, they respond to natural disasters here at home, and they stand ready to protect our sovereignty and that of our allies. Our men and women in uniform put their lives on the line for us, so it seems to me it's only right that our province be there for them.

Ceci est la raison pour laquelle notre gouvernement présente un projet de loi qui rendra la vie du personnel militaire et de leur famille plus facile.

That's why our government is introducing legislation that would make life a little easier for military personnel and their families.

I would like to thank members of the Canadian Forces Liaison Council, including chair Sonja Bata, for being here today. They are in the gallery today.

This proposed legislation has two main elements. First, if passed, it would provide immediate access to OHIP coverage for eligible military family members. As members of the Legislature may know, newcomers to Ontario face a 90-day waiting period for services insured under OHIP. This policy affects family members from the military who have moved to our province. Even in cases where coverage is provided by the province they are leaving, there can still be hardship. For example, military families coming to Ontario from Quebec often have to pay physician fees up front during the OHIP waiting period. They request reimbursement later. This is a burden military families should not have to bear. Our proposed legislation, if passed, would make OHIP-eligible military family members exempt from the 90-day waiting period. They would have immediate access to coverage for the full range of provincially funded care.

Second, this legislation provides job protection to reservists. Many Ontarians make the brave and selfless choice to serve in the Canadian Forces reserves. They do this on top of raising their families, building their careers and contributing to their communities. Their commitment to the reserves can mean extended missions away from home and work for either a crisis in Canada or a mission abroad. For example, about 200 Ontario reservists will be deployed to Afghanistan in March of next year. Most employers appreciate this commitment and ensure their job is safe and is there for them upon their return.

Ce projet de loi, si adopté, accordera à tout réserviste une garantie absolue que leur emploi est protégé alors qu'ils sont en service.

This legislation, if passed, will provide an absolute guarantee of job protection for every reservist while on a tour of duty.

1400

There's one more commitment our government is making to military families. It may only ever impact a small number of people, but it's important because it's about removing an obstacle that could stand in the way of an Olympic dream. The Quest for Gold Ontario athlete assistance program has a one-year waiting period; to

qualify, you must have resided in Ontario for one year. Effective immediately, military families will be exempt from this requirement.

A writer by the name of David Kenyon Webster, who fought in the Second World War, once wrote, "Those things which are precious are saved only by sacrifice." When the men and women of the Canadian Forces are asked to make sacrifices to safeguard what we hold precious—freedom and democracy—they don't hesitate. So when their families need important government services, we're not going to make them wait. Reservists make a tremendous sacrifice for all of us. They're the backbone of any military. We're going to back them up and make sure their job is safe for them.

Les personnes qui portent l'uniforme font un travail difficile. Elles s'inquiètent pour leur famille, et leur famille s'inquiète pour elles.

People who serve in uniform have a tough job. They can't help but worry for their families, and their families can't help but worry for them. The measures that we propose today will make life a little easier for the entire family, giving them peace of mind knowing our province supports them. Ontarians in the Canadian Forces do so much for us. Together, through this legislation, we can do something for them.

This bill is really a modest but important way to say thank you. I ask all members for their support so that together we can stand up for our military families. Let me add as well that it appears that we are going to have unanimous support for this bill. On behalf not of my government but of Ontario military families, I want to thank all members and particularly members of the opposition for their support for this timely intervention.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I want to take this opportunity to thank the Premier and congratulate Labour Minister Brad Duguid for recognizing the importance of protecting the civilian jobs of our military reservists. It's time that our reservists' contribution to world peace are recognized by the citizens of this province.

I originally introduced a similar bill last May, and a revised private members' bill was ready to be presented for first reading in this Parliament. The intent was that employers be required to secure the civilian jobs of our reserve force members. Our reservists deserve the opportunity to return to their civilian jobs.

I am personally aware of one reservist, who is my constituent, who lost his civilian employment while serving as a peacemaker. This is simply not acceptable.

I want to thank Lieutenant-Colonel John Selkirk, executive director of Reserves 2000; Brigadier-General Alan J. Howard; and the Honourable Senator Hugh Segal for their support and assistance in the development of my private member's bill. I also would like to thank the thousands of Legion comrades from across Ontario who signed a petition calling on the government to protect the civilian jobs of our military reservists.

If passed, this legislation will be welcome news for the thousands of military reservists who leave their jobs and families to serve our country.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: On behalf of our party, I want to express our appreciation to the members of the military for the tremendous sacrifices that they make on our behalf. I'm pleased that the government has finally started—and I say “started”—to respond to the concerns that our party has been putting on the record.

Mr. Martiniuk from Cambridge has just spoken to the private member's bill that he introduced for reservists. We're glad that the government has finally seen fit to move forward. But I would say to you, there are two other examples of recommendations that our party has made. Last spring, John Tory and John Yakabuski led the call in the Ontario Legislature to have the McGuinty government repeal the health tax for the men and women in the armed forces when they are living outside of this province. Our party also supported the request for an increase in special funding for the Phoenix Centre for Children and Families near CFB Petawawa due to the need for increased mental health services for the children of those who serve. So far, the government has not responded to those two initiatives, but we are pleased about the response today.

We feel it is important to do whatever we can to defend the interests of the men and the women who defend us so well on a daily basis. We would hope that this government would move forward. They are two other occasions I've just highlighted where they can also continue to show that they support the military in real and meaningful ways. We have always supported our military people.

I would say to the Premier and the government that we are very disappointed today. This is a bill that all parties, all sides, all people can support. We're at the start of a new four-year session. It is most regrettable that the members of the opposition did not have the opportunity to work with the government and that you did not give us prior notice of this bill. We would have been happy to give you the support that you're looking for today, but I think it's a troubling sign if this is what is going to happen in the next four years. I was hoping that we could work together in a more co-operative manner. I think the people in the province of Ontario expect us to do so, and when you have initiatives such as the one today where we all want to do what's right for the men and women who serve us in the military, certainly there was a wonderful opportunity to do so.

Again, we will support this bill and we hope the government will continue to listen to the members of the PC caucus that have other legislation and other needs that they feel need to be addressed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Chair recognizes the member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations. I would like to say that I'm sharing my time with our new member from Nickel Belt as well, so let's hear it for her. And welcome to our esteemed guests.

Certainly we in the New Democratic Party of Ontario support our reservists and support our troops. We may have a question about this particular conflict and the way it is being waged, but we never have a question about the

care that our reservists should get both here and abroad. So we are in support of this bill.

However, I echo some of the concerns of the member from Kitchener–Waterloo about the process. I would ask the labour minister in the future to give us a little bit more time to look at this bill. The reason being is not to pick at it, it is not to weaken it, it is to strengthen it.

When I'm looking at the employment standards part of this bill—I'm the employment standards critic—I already note a few areas where it could have been strengthened. For example, I see here “an employee who has been employed for at least six ... months”—I would ask the labour minister about that. There may be instances where that may be waived and we would hope that it would be for our reservists.

Looking at the bill again—we wish we had more time—we also note that the employer may postpone reinstatement for two weeks or until the first pay period following the leave. We wonder why that is necessary. Again we ask, could this bill not be strengthened? We're looking at reservists here, people who are going to pay perhaps the ultimate sacrifice for their country. We've lost over 70 young men and women already in Afghanistan, and so we are asking a great deal. Could we not extend it another two weeks, another six months? Could we not strengthen this bill? So that is why we ask to have prior knowledge, a chance to read this bill in anticipation, because we don't want to pick it apart. And to our esteemed guests, I would say what we're hoping for is the strongest statement possible.

Again, regarding OHIP—I know our member from Nickel Belt is going to speak to this at some length too—I would say that we see a little bit more spin than substance. We would hope again there for more substance. But overall, absolutely anything that we can do to make the lot of our reservists better we in the New Democratic Party will do.

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M^{me} France Gélinas: I too would like to express our thanks to the military personnel and their families. The NDP is pleased to support this bill.

But lots of other groups who move to Ontario are not covered for that 90-day period, must pay out of pocket and never get reimbursed. We are talking here about residents of Ontario who have moved away and move back to Ontario. We are talking about our new immigrants.

We've also noticed as we look at this bill that Ontario has never established a reciprocal process for Quebec, which means that every other resident of Quebec who moves to Ontario must pay when they use health care services in Ontario and wait to be reimbursed by the government of Quebec. We are pleased that the military families won't have to go through this anymore. We think that a reciprocal agreement should be worked on for the people of Quebec who move to Ontario.

I would now like to ask for unanimous consent to move the second and third reading of the Fairness for Military Families Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member is asking for unanimous consent for second and third reading. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Mr. Speaker, I understand that I am nonetheless formally required to move the following.

FAIRNESS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES
ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AND HEALTH INSURANCE), 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR LES
FAMILLES DES MILITAIRES (NORMES
D'EMPLOI ET ASSURANCE-SANTÉ)

Mr. McGuinty moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide reservist leave and the Health Insurance Act to eliminate the waiting period for military families / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin de prévoir un congé pour réservistes et la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin d'éliminer la période d'attente pour les familles des militaires.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

FAIRNESS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES
ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AND HEALTH INSURANCE), 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR LES
FAMILLES DES MILITAIRES (NORMES
D'EMPLOI ET ASSURANCE-SANTÉ)

Mr. McGuinty moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide reservist leave and the Health Insurance Act to eliminate the waiting period for military families / *Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin de prévoir un congé pour réservistes et la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin d'éliminer la période d'attente pour les familles des militaires.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(SCHOOL CROSSINGS), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DE LA ROUTE (PASSAGES POUR ÉLÈVES)

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to school crossings / *Projet de loi 3, Loi modifiant*

le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les passages pour élèves.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Frank Klees: At present, subsection 176(3) of the act requires that drivers who are required to stop at a school crossing must remain stopped until all persons have cleared the half of the roadway in which they are traveling. This bill simply changes that requirement to ensure that drivers remain stopped until all persons have cleared the entire roadway.

This was brought to my attention by Mrs. Barbara Comisso of Woodbridge, who herself is a school crossing guard. She indicated that there have been a number of occasions when there have been potentially dangerous situations where children may well have been injured. I wrote a letter to the minister October 25 asking him to take action on this, and I would ask that he give serious consideration to doing so. I thank you.

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION (ONTARIO) ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA COMMISSION
ONTARIENNE DE DÉLIMITATION DES
CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to provide for the periodic establishment of a commission to readjust the number and boundaries of electoral districts for the purposes of the Legislative Assembly / *Projet de loi 4, Loi prévoyant la constitution périodique d'une commission chargée de réviser le nombre et les limites des circonscriptions électorales aux fins de l'Assemblée législative.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Recently, our Premier has been demanding representation by population for Ontario in the House of Commons. However, right now we do not have representation by population for all Ontarians in this Legislature. Right now, because the average population of northern Ontario ridings is two thirds of the average population of southern Ontario ridings, we have a situation where a vote in a northern Ontario riding is worth the equivalent of 1.5, or one and a half, votes in a southern Ontario riding.

This bill would create an independent Electoral—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry to interrupt the speaker, but the speaker was being interrupted by numerous members. I would just ask that we show

respect for one another and allow the member the opportunity to deliver his explanation.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This bill to create an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission would ensure that all Ontarians receive representation by population now and in the future. As well, in an effort to ensure meaningful representation for northern Ontario, this bill would also enshrine a legislated minimum of 11 ridings in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I hope the member is soon to be completed.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: The commission would be made up of one judge and two other eligible voters appointed by the Speaker. If we are to demand rep by pop for Canada, we must have rep by pop for Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for all three parties to speak for up to five minutes on the International Day of Disabled Persons.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed. The Speaker recognizes the Minister of Community and Social Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: L'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies a proclamé le 3 décembre Journée internationale des personnes handicapées.

The theme of this year is, "Decent work for persons with disabilities." The day focuses on how to expand job opportunities for persons with disabilities and on ways to fulfill benefits from the abilities of this often overlooked talent pool.

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L'Ontario reconnaît l'importance pour les personnes handicapées d'avoir accès au marché du travail comme un droit fondamental pour tous.

As our economy continues to grow, finding skilled employees is becoming more difficult, especially as our workforce ages and the baby boom generation retires. People with disabilities represent a skilled and diverse talent pool that we cannot afford to overlook.

We have come a long way from the time of President Roosevelt, when people felt they had to hide their disability.

We know that people with disabilities have the ability to contribute to all aspects of our society, to live rich, full lives and to enjoy satisfying careers. But in order for people of all abilities to participate fully in the workforce, we need more accessible, welcoming work environments for them.

As Lieutenant Governor David Onley recently said, "I care passionately about accessibility, because it is only through fully accessible communities that Ontarians with disabilities can take their rightful place as contributors to

the social, cultural and economic life of this province." We share Lieutenant Governor Onley's dream of an accessible Ontario.

Over the last year, we have made significant progress in implementing the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This act is our province's roadmap to make Ontario accessible to all people by 2025, through the development, implementation and enforcement of accessibility standards for some of the most important areas of our lives.

We will soon begin implementing the first of five province-wide accessibility standards, in the area of customer service, which will come into force this January.

L'accès aux services se traduira par des services accessibles de même niveau et égaux à ceux offerts à la population générale.

We are also finalizing the second standard for accessible transportation, which will help people with disabilities get to work, access recreational opportunities and participate fully in every aspect of their communities.

We are making progress towards our goals, et ce n'est qu'un début.

We know that there is still a long way to go, but, working together, we can make sure that Ontarians of all abilities have every opportunity to reach their full potential. That is why we are breaking down barriers to employment in the social assistance system, and we are asking businesses to work with us to find new opportunities for people with disabilities.

Nous continuerons sur notre lancée et développerons de nouvelles normes dans le domaine de l'information et des communications, de l'environnement physique et du travail.

These standards will translate into a province where all Ontarians will have access to goods, services, education and employment, whether they have a disability or not. That is how we are working together to make the dream of an accessible Ontario a reality.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the official opposition to recognize December 3 as the International Day of Disabled Persons.

Since 1992, when the United Nations General Assembly first asked member countries to observe the International Day of Disabled Persons with a view to furthering integration in society of persons with disabilities, our province has made great strides in addressing the concerns of persons with disabilities.

I'm proud of the Progressive Conservative caucus's long history of leadership, consultation and co-operation in addressing the concerns of people with disabilities.

Ontario was the first province to adopt a Human Rights Code, which was amended in 1981 to extend protection on the basis of disability.

We've also seen passage in this province of other significant legislation advancing the rights of those with disabilities, such as the Ontario disabilities act and the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

One of the concerns that this House must recognize is the special set of problems faced by disabled persons in

smaller communities. In my own riding of Whitby–Oshawa, a great group of volunteers have come together to establish the Abilities Centre, which is a sports, recreation and performing arts facility for people with special needs that recognizes abilities and does not focus on disabilities.

In other ridings such as York–Simcoe, local governments are actively at work identifying barriers faced by people with disabilities and actions being taken to rectify problems. As an example, the accessibility plan of the town of Innisfil identifies several major problems. These include a lack of public transportation and alternative transportation for scooters and wheelchairs. What transportation is available is often financially out of reach. A lack of supportive housing is also an issue, with some disabled people having to move out of the community in order to find the housing that they need.

To remedy these problems, communities such as Innisfil need the provincial government to step up to the plate with financial assistance. We will be watching this government closely to see if its promises to assist disabled persons are backed up with real financial support.

Not only government needs to take the needs of disabled persons into account. One of York region's local newspapers recently noted that the last full-service gas station in Aurora had closed. This may result in inconvenience for many people, but for disabled people it means a drive that takes them far out of their way to find a full-service gas station. Sometimes it is little changes that we do not even consider that can have a tremendous effect on the lives of disabled persons.

Today is a day to celebrate Ontario's achievements, but it is also a day to acknowledge that barriers still exist. On behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus, I renew our commitment to working toward the day when we can truly say that persons with disabilities can enjoy the full and equal access to all aspects of life that so many of us take for granted on a daily basis. I hope that all of us will give substantial consideration to our shared responsibility in working co-operatively toward a shared vision of Ontario where all members of society can fulfill their full potential.

I invite all Ontarians to join this House in recognizing the International Day of Disabled Persons and committing to building bridges of opportunity for our friends, neighbours and families.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today in Sudbury, the Independent Living Resource Centre is celebrating the International Day of Disabled Persons, as proclaimed by the United Nations. The Independent Living Resource Centre offers services in Sudbury-Manitoulin and in a large part of my riding of Nickel Belt. It is a community-based not-for-profit organization that is controlled by and for persons with disabilities. On October 16, they kicked off their second annual great wheelchair challenge, an event where people volunteer to spend a day in a wheelchair.

Les gens qui ont accepté de relever le défi du fauteuil roulant ont passé une journée complète de leur vie en fauteuil. Ils ont dû essayer de faire quelques activités de la vie quotidienne telles qu'essayer d'acheter un pantalon

et d'essayer le pantalon dans une cabine d'essayage, en plus des activités de leur journée ordinaire.

The Independent Living Resource Centre is presently celebrating their success: More than 50 people took the challenge. They were able to experience for themselves the need to make things far more accessible, raising awareness of the necessity for accessibility.

The annual observance of the International Day of Disabled Persons on December 3 aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic, cultural and working life.

The theme of the day, as we've heard, is "Decent work for persons with disabilities." I would add "decent-paying work" for people with disabilities. I know that after today's celebration, a lot of them will be participating in the Tuesday and Thursday nights \$2 supper, partly because they want to meet with their friends and socialize, but also because 95% of the people who belong to that resource group are unemployed and rely on ODSP, the Ontario disability support program, and Ontario Works as their only source of income. While it is important to talk about their right to a job, we also must ensure dignity for persons with disabilities who are unable to work. When I talked to their president, Mr. Earl Black, he told me that they, like most groups working with people with disabilities, want to see changes to ODSP.

1430

Le programme d'appui aux personnes handicapées de l'Ontario a besoin d'être revu afin qu'il offre une pension suffisante pour couvrir le coût du panier d'épicerie santé tel que calculé par le bureau de santé local, les frais reliés au logement dans la communauté où la personne vit en plus de la prime de dépenses personnelles. De cette façon, le montant sera suffisant pour s'assurer que les gens ne retombent pas sous le seuil de la pauvreté.

The Ontario disability program should be revised so that it provides sufficient money for people with disabilities to afford a healthy food basket, as calculated by the health unit, an accommodation allowance that reflects the real cost of rent, and an allocation for living expenses so that those members depending on ODSP do not fall below the poverty level.

We also need more flexibility with ODSP so that the people at the Independent Living Resource Centre can make the transition to decent employment much easier.

Aujourd'hui, je veux souligner le travail important fait par toute l'équipe du centre de ressources, que ce soit au niveau de l'équipe, du personnel, des bénévoles, des membres du conseil d'administration, et souligner la contribution de leur directrice générale, M^{me} Norma Shaw, ainsi que de leur président, M. Earl Black.

I want to recognize the Independent Living Resource Centre for their good work and wish them all the best in their celebration.

Poverty and unemployment are two key determinants of health, but one does not have to lead to the other. Unemployment should not lead to poverty for people with disabilities.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I want to extend our congratulations to you. We look forward to working with you and hope that we can stay on your good side—for at least the first week.

My first question is for the Premier—I'm not too worried about staying on his good side, but I would like to extend congratulations to the Premier and his party on their re-election, much as it pains me. Despite our differences, I'm sure we agree that on all sides of the aisle we have the shared goal of a better Ontario. And on that positive note, off to the races.

Premier, since January 2005, Ontario has lost close to 154,000 manufacturing jobs, and your response has repeatedly been to shrug your shoulders and whistle Don't Worry, Be Happy. Some might describe it as whistling past the graveyard.

One of the signs that Ontario's economy is in trouble are predictions for economic growth. In the budget last March, your government indicated that the economy would grow by 2.8% next year, and just days after the election, RBC said that the economy would grow by just 1.8%. That's a significant difference. Premier, can you confirm whether or not the government's own economic advisors concur with the RBC prediction?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In the spirit offered in the preface to the leader of the official opposition's remarks, let me seize the opportunity as well, if I may, first of all to congratulate him on the assumption of his new responsibilities. I wish him the very best in that regard. To you, Mr. Speaker, I offer the same and assure you of our co-operation.

With respect to the issue raised by the leader of the official opposition, obviously I cannot agree with his characterization of our approach. The economy continues to grow, not as fast as we would like it, but not as slowly as many had predicted it would grow. It's demonstrated tremendous resilience. To be more specific, Ontarians, entrepreneurs and workers alike have demonstrated tremendous resilience and innovation. During the course of the past four years, 422,000 more jobs have been created. The unemployment rate today is at its lowest level in the past five years. We will continue to work hard with the private sector and labour alike to find new and creative ways to strengthen this economy and create new high-paying jobs.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The Premier continues to use his 422,000 number. I know that there's a report,

from last month, of 20,000 new jobs, and all of them were in the government, in the public sector. It would be nice if we could get a breakdown. We've heard that the Premier is even using people who worked one day, election day, as part of these numbers. We would ask him to be straightforward with the people of the province with respect to job creation.

The reality is that you and your Liberal colleagues haven't learned from your last tenure in government, the Peterson years. You're taxing, spending and regulating the province into the ground. For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeds the national average. Our economic growth has fallen behind all other provinces and is now predicted to rank dead last this year by both RBC and CIBC. For 2008, Scotiabank predicts another 10th-place finish for Ontario. According to the C.D. Howe Institute, we now have the least competitive business tax structure in Canada—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Answer, please, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I note that the leader of the official opposition is talking about tax cuts; I just don't recall seeing any of that in their platform. What I can say is that we're proud of the new jobs that have been created, and it is true that some of those jobs are for full-time nurses, some of those jobs are for full-time health inspectors and some of those jobs are for full-time teachers. We are proud to welcome all those and so many others to the workforce here in the province of Ontario.

In terms of some of the things that we have been able to do—and we will have more announcements in due course about what more we will do to help support manufacturing, forestry and agriculture in particular—we have had in place an auto sector fund which has leveraged \$7 billion worth of new investments and over 7,000 jobs. In our manufacturing sector specifically, we have a \$500-million advanced manufacturing investment strategy which so far—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's some relief that the Premier didn't fall into the blame game, which he has perfected to a science, with respect to governments of the past and the federal government. We may hear that in his final response.

Premier, the condition of the Ontario economy is not an accident. Your government's tax hikes, increased regulation and spending are drawing investment away and hurting Ontario families. You don't seem to give any sign or indication that you understand the gravity of the situation.

I am asking the Premier, will he assure us today that the upcoming economic statement will include expediting corporate and capital tax cuts and reduced regulation? Will you do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will agree on this score: that we are being challenged, particularly in the manufacturing sector, when it comes to our economy. About 15% of Ontario jobs are found within the manufacturing

sector. I know the leader of the official opposition will know, for example, that when it comes to biotechnology, digital media, financial services—including insurance—and information and communication technologies, we've been growing at two to three times the rate of our nearest competition south of the border in the US. We have been very strong in that area, but we are challenged in the manufacturing sector. He knows that the causes include the cost of energy—the cost of oil in particular—the high dollar, a sluggish US economy and emerging strong economies like Brazil, Russia, India and China. That's why we will continue to invest in our next generation jobs fund. That's why we will continue to support the advanced manufacturing investment strategy. That's why we will continue to invest in supports for our farmers and for the forestry sector. We are prepared to continue to work with all our sectors to strengthen the economy and ensure there are good high-paying jobs for all Ontarians.

1440

FAMILY DAY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier, again, dealing with the economy and what we view as his apparent nonchalance about some of the real challenges facing the manufacturing sector and the rest of the economy, the Premier began his election campaign a number of weeks ago with the promise of a new holiday in February. At the same time, we're hearing repeatedly about shrinkage in the economic growth projections and decline in productivity. My question for the Premier is this: Did he and his colleagues consider the economic implications of this action before justifying it on what are apparently political grounds?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: If the leader of the official opposition is now telling us he opposes this new holiday, he's opposed to Family Day and he's opposed to a day for families to get a little bit of a reprieve in this hectic just-in-time lifestyle that we all seem to be leading, he should stand up and say so. But I believe that if they can do that in Alberta, if they can do that in places like Manitoba, if they can have 11 holidays south of the border that are respected by employers there and we're only going to have nine holidays here in Ontario, I am in favour of a Family Day for the people of Ontario. If the leader of the official opposition is against that, he should say so.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We're in favour of a growing and prosperous economy in the province of Ontario, and we're concerned about what's happening to the economy in this province. We are concerned about what's happening in terms of the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector, the impact on many, many communities and many, many families across this province, whom you seem to have adopted such a nonchalant attitude towards.

We know that the Premier didn't consider the implications. Gerry Macartney, the CEO and General Manager of the London Chamber of Commerce, said, "By

your government's own admission there was no cost-benefit analysis undertaken to determine what impact this decision would have on Ontario's flagging manufacturing sector; how production schedules might be impacted; how already-set budget targets would be impacted ...; or what impact this decision may have on our growing productivity gap with the US and the G7." Why didn't his government focus first on making sure our economic fundamentals are sound?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition says he's concerned about the state of the economy, but when we moved forward with a half-billion-dollar auto sector fund, which ultimately leveraged \$7 billion worth of new investment and made us the number one auto producer in North America for the first time since the invention of the car, they opposed that. When we moved ahead with our advanced manufacturing investment strategy, which has so far leveraged \$617 million in new investment and created 3,400 jobs, they opposed that. When we moved forward with \$1 billion in supports for our farmers, they opposed that. When we moved forward with \$1 billion in supports for the forestry sector, they opposed that.

If Ontarians want to know who's prepared to roll up their sleeves and work with business and labour, and get down in the trenches and help strengthen this economy, they can count on this government.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: If we keep going the way we're going, we won't have any sleeves to roll up; that's the reality. You talk about the auto sector. The CEO of Linamar, an auto parts maker with which I'm sure you're familiar, with 7,500 employees in Ontario, says that this one piece of legislation is going to result in 60,000 lost productivity hours for her company. That's just one company—an important one in the auto sector.

Judith Andrew of the CFIB says, "It's small businesses, those operated by Ontario's families"—which you seem to want to express so much concern about—"that are going to have to shoulder the burden of this."

The city of Toronto is going to see \$2.3 million added to their operating costs as a result of this decision. We don't know what it's going to cost the Ontario government.

My question to the Premier: With no consultations, no economic analysis, how can you justify this being your number one priority without first making sure our economic fundamentals are sound?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to remind the leader of the official opposition, as hard as it is for him to come to grips with this, that the fact of the matter is that during the course of the past four years, this economy generated 422,000 more jobs. Today, the level of unemployment is at its lowest level in some five years.

We're not going to rest on our laurels; we're not just going to stick with the auto sector fund and the advanced manufacturing investment strategy. We are also bringing to the table the largest fund of its kind in North America. It's a \$1.15-billion next generation jobs fund.

The members of the opposition may be opposed to us using public dollars to help lend strength to the manufacturing sector in particular, but we see it differently. We think we have a shared responsibility to work with our partners in labour and in business to help them strengthen themselves so that we can in turn strengthen this economy and support good-quality public services like health care, education and investments in infrastructure. We will continue to work with labour and with the manufacturing sector in particular as well as forestry and farming to strengthen those—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question?

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Thank you, Speaker, and allow me to congratulate you on the assumption of your office—although I've often wondered about the good sense of anyone who would want to be Speaker in this House. Let me also congratulate members of the government, but let me also say that there is work to be done.

My question for the Premier is this: At a time when Ontario has lost 175,000 manufacturing jobs, when the McGuinty government should be taking action to sustain jobs and working families, can the Premier explain why he's merely going to ask for a study of manufacturing job loss in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say that the leader of the third party, of course, knows that we're doing much more than taking a long-term view of the future of manufacturing in Ontario. I for one believe it's bright and very promising. We are going to continue to live in a market here in North America of some half a billion consumers. Those consumers will be looking for sophisticated, value-added manufacturing products, and we will continue to make those here in the province of Ontario.

I can say that in addition to looking at the long term, we will continue to support our new initiatives, including our \$1.15-billion next generation jobs fund. It will be modeled after the approach that we brought with the auto sector fund. That half-billion dollars leveraged \$7 billion worth of new investment.

So we are coming to the table in a real and meaningful way. I'm hopeful that the leader of the third party and his party will in fact be supportive of initiatives that we will be announcing in due course when it comes to the kinds of investments that that particular fund will be supporting.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about his auto sector strategy. We see double-digit unemployment in an auto sector town like Windsor. We see more jobs being lost in Oakville, in St. Thomas, in London, in St. Catharines and in Oshawa: 175,000 manufacturing jobs lost; 45,000 direct and indirect jobs lost in the forest sector of northern Ontario. These are alarming figures.

So I ask the Premier again, with those alarming figures, can you explain to the people of Ontario why, as

your first step, you're merely going to study the loss of manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's not what I said and that's not an accurate representation of the course of action that we are pursuing. I think we have an ongoing responsibility to understand where manufacturing is going in North America, and particularly here, of course, in Ontario. If the leader of the NDP thinks that that's not a good investment of energy and our time, then he should say so. But I think it's important to understand where the global economy is going.

Beyond that, we've also come to the table with our next generation jobs fund. We are still at the table with our half-billion-dollar advanced manufacturing investment strategy. We continue to phase out the capital tax. We continue to reduce business education taxes. We continue to send out a signal to the world at large that we are a great place in which to invest. We have the best-skilled and most educated workforce of any G7 country right here in the province of Ontario. We are the best in terms of our skills and level of education. I think we've got a lot to bring to the competitive marketplace.

I look forward to continuing to champion this economy on behalf of Ontarians. I ask for the leader of the NDP's support as we work together to strengthen the Ontario economy.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It seems to me the Premier is trying to avoid the question. Your next generation jobs fund is old news for the auto sector; they've been laying off tens of thousands of people since you announced it. It's old news for the forest sector; they've laid off another 1,500 people since election day.

The question is this: When the banks say that Ontario will rank last in economic growth in 2008, when the auto sector analysts say Ontario will be North America's biggest auto production loser through 2012, do you really believe that it's an adequate response to hire someone who's responsible for the loss of 45,000 forest sector jobs to now study the loss of manufacturing sector jobs?

1450

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I just can't agree with the characterization presented by the leader of the third party. I think it's important for us to be able to walk and chew gum at the same time. It's important for us to understand what's going on in the global economy, particularly as it impacts the manufacturing sector, the forestry sector and agriculture here in Ontario, while, at the same time, continuing to come to the table in a real, substantive and meaningful way.

We've got \$1.15 billion by way of our next generation jobs fund and half a billion dollars in our advanced manufacturing investment strategy. We've got \$1 billion in supports so far for agriculture. We're coming to the table with a new risk management program. We just couldn't wait on the federal government to come, so we're going to move ahead on our own. We're also working with the forestry sector.

I just can't agree with the leader of the NDP's characterization. I think it is important for us to understand

what is happening out there. Beyond that, the fact is, we are coming to the table, and we're looking forward to working with our partners to help strengthen the economy at a particularly challenging time.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: You seem to want to talk about the nebulous concept of the global economy, but you need to recognize that when Abitibi closed the paper mill in Kenora, they moved production to Quebec; when Cascades closed the paper mill in Thunder Bay, they moved production to Quebec; when Abitibi closed the other paper mill in Thunder Bay, they moved production to Quebec; when Norampac closed the liner board mill in Red Rock, they moved production to Quebec. Manitoba has added almost 1,500 new jobs in the forest sector while Ontario, under the McGuinty government, has lost 45,000.

Premier, do you understand that things like high electricity rates are a key reason why many Ontario manufacturing and forest sector jobs are leaving the province, and if you do understand that, will you express, as we have, opposition to Ontario Power Generation's announced plan to raise industrial hydro rates a further 14%?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP may know that I recently had the opportunity to sit down once again with Premier Jean Charest, and we both talked about some of the challenges that we are facing, particularly insofar as our forestry sectors, agriculture sectors and manufacturing sectors are concerned. About three quarters of all manufacturing jobs in Canada are found in the provinces of Quebec and Ontario. He just didn't present it the way the leader of the NDP presented it. He just didn't present it that way at all.

I can tell you that we have some specific supports when it comes to the cost of electricity for our manufacturing sector and especially for our pulp and paper electricity transition program. It's a \$140-million program that's going to reduce electricity costs by 15% over three years to allow companies to transition to a more competitive and sustainable platform. I'm herein specifically referencing the pulp and paper industry. The leader of the NDP is right when it comes to lending support to this group of industries, and that's why we have come to the table, as I say, with \$140 million.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, in your meetings with Jean Charest I'm sure he said, "Thank you for sending us those jobs." You announced support for the pulp and paper sector. Since then, Domtar has idled a further 300 jobs at the paper mill in Dryden. Now AbitibiBowater has announced the permanent closure of their mill in Thunder Bay. We've seen further layoffs in Kapuskasing, and then following on that, you see literally thousands of jobs lost in the sawmill sector because they have nowhere to send their chips with all the layoffs in the pulp sector.

Premier, there are things your government could do right away. You could support an industrial hydro rate

that would allow manufacturers and forest sector companies to continue to work in Ontario. You haven't met that test yet. You could bring in a proactive jobs commissioner or you could promote a "buy Ontario" policy. Will you do any of those things to help sustain manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're going to have an interesting and what I think is a very important and hardly an academic debate over the course of the next weeks and months, and I look forward to that.

I think it's probably fair to say that the opposition will characterize our challenges here as being induced entirely and exclusively by the government, but I think Ontarians and Canadians know there's a little bit more at play than that. They understand that the high dollar has an impact on our competitiveness. They understand that the high cost of oil has an impact on our competitiveness. They understand that the sluggish US economy has an impact on our competitiveness. They understand that the slowdown of the US housing market has a direct impact on what is happening in our forestry sector. They understand that the development of strong new powerful economies like China and India has an impact on what is happening here in Ontario.

We will continue to find ways to come to the table with our manufacturing sector, and although the opposition may not like to hear it, we need another partner; that is the federal government. If they would come to the table and lend more support for manufacturing, for forestry and farmers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary

Mr. Howard Hampton: Here we are, the first day, and already the Premier is looking everywhere, anywhere, to find someone else to blame. Premier, it's very clear that the loss of 175,000 manufacturing jobs and low pay, for example, are root causes of the increasing poverty levels in Ontario.

Once again there are immediate things the McGuinty government could do. The McGuinty government could raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour now. Or you could end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement from the lowest-income kids in Ontario now. Or you could use the funding that the federal government has already given you for affordable housing to build affordable housing now. Will the McGuinty government do any of those three things now?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure how the leader of the NDP is entitled to jump from manufacturing to poverty issues, but I'm pleased to address them.

In addition to putting in place our Ontario child benefit, which will grow to the point where it's going to provide \$1,100 per child growing up in a low-income family, in addition to raising social assistance rates three separate times, and in addition to raising the minimum wage 17% and continuing to raise it to \$10.25 an hour, we will move beyond that. The leader of the NDP will know that we have in place a new cabinet committee which is devoted to putting in place indicators and targets

and a focused strategy that will result in us achieving our targets when it comes to poverty reduction. Our strategy will include new dental benefits, a continuing growth of the minimum wage, our Ontario child benefit, more child care spaces and more affordable housing. That is a great start to an important new initiative that we are about to embrace as a new government.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is for the minister who is responsible for small business. I have some information to kick-start your study on the loss of manufacturing jobs. It comes from Aurora. Nicholas C. Hindman, Sr., the senior vice-president and chief financial officer for Westell Technologies, said this when they announced that 300 jobs would be shut down in their facility in Aurora by the end of this year: "We are one of the few manufacturers left here. This is a survival situation. It has gotten to the point where we cannot compete any longer."

This is one example. I want to ask the minister responsible for small business, given the state of affairs particularly of the manufacturing sector in Ontario, does he support the imposition of a new \$2-billion tax on small business in this province?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: The Premier has already indicated that our manufacturers are facing some challenges, there's no question about it. Those challenges are basically coming from global competition. It's coming from the high Canadian dollar and it's also coming because of the big economy in the US as well.

But our government has done a lot already. We have the advanced manufacturing strategy. We are doing everything to make the tax structure very competitive: the capital cost allowance is being matched with the federal government, and we have eliminated the capital tax on businesses as well. So our government has taken a lot of initiatives to make sure that our business environment becomes competitive.

We are still facing challenges—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

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Mr. Frank Klees: With all due respect, I think the minister missed the point. The question that I asked the minister is whether he, as minister with responsibility for small business in this province, supports the imposition of a new \$2-billion tax on the manufacturing sector in this province. He didn't answer the question. May I perhaps inform the minister that we are told an economist at BMO Capital Markets estimates the impact of the new holiday tax of this government to be \$2 billion.

I want to know, will this minister responsible for small business stand up for small business in this province and oppose the imposition of that new tax on small business in this province? Will he do his job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We got through half of question period, and we were doing very well. I

would trust that we can continue on. I want you to know that I've been keeping my own little list of who's been naughty and who has been nice and I'm going to be conscious of that. But we all need to respect one another.

The Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, please.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: We need to have a balance between family life and business. Ontario workers work very hard and they deserve to have some time off with their families. That is why we are doing this. But at the same time, I want to say that our business sector is very strong. We have created 420,000 new jobs in this province since this government took office, and that is because of the hard work of our entrepreneurs. It's the hard work of our business people and employees; that's why they deserve to take some time off to spend with their families.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Finance. I'd like to preface my question to the minister with a couple of quotes which were taken directly from Ed Waitzer, the former chair of the Ontario Securities Commission, as reported in this weekend's Toronto Star.

The first quote is very simple: "The [securities] regulators are becoming like the people they're trying to regulate."

Quote number two: "They're spending their time managing reputations instead of getting results. There's not a lot of accountability. They can talk a big game, and the fact is they don't deliver."

To the minister, what concrete action is your ministry going to take to fix what even industry insiders are calling an international embarrassment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We continue to work with the OSC. The first concrete measure is, we will continue to support a single securities regulator in this country. I would point out to the member opposite that every other major western capital market has a single security regulator. All the experts—and I've met with a number of them since assuming this portfolio—say that that is, first and foremost, the most important thing that we can do in the context of better enforcement. For instance, in the United States they have one security regulator; in Great Britain they have one security regulator; and in France. All of the individuals that I have spoken with to date have indicated that's a first important step.

In addition, there are a number of other steps that can be taken and we are in the process of looking at those. I would be happy to respond to that in the member's supplementary question.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the minister and I didn't hear any specifics on what he can do, not what he wants to do; nothing specific at all about what he can do and will do. So let me help him out a little bit with two recommendations from the last session's finance committee report that looked at securities issues. The all-party committee suggested that the minister could end the

conflict of interest at the OSC by separating out its investigative functions from its adjudicative functions. The all-party committee recommended that the minister could end the conflict of interest amongst securities dealers by no longer allowing the dealer trade association to investigate and rule on industry complaints.

My question is simple: These were two simple recommendations from almost three years ago. When are we going to see action on them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am pleased to report that we have added 16 additional enforcement staff to the OSC's enforcement unit, which will be in place by March 31, 2008, which are part of their staffing plans that were included in budgets that were submitted to you. The Attorney General is also reviewing a report on enhancing the enforcement of capital market offences.

The member opposite knows that there are a number of issues beyond the strict regulatory ones. There's the question of enforcement. There's the question of law enforcement agencies. But again, first and foremost, what is most significant is that this country get a single securities regulator. This government and this Premier will continue to stand up for Ontario investors in trying to ensure that we get that that single securities regulator, which is the most important thing any government can do in terms of securities safety.

ABOLITION OF BRITISH SLAVE TRADE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my pleasure to rise before you today and ask a question of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, you are well aware that yesterday was the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, as marked annually by the United Nations. Across the world, this milestone was marked in different ways. Here in Ontario, special attention has been paid to commemorating the bicentenary of this act to abolish the British slave trade. Can the minister please share with us what this government has done to help commemorate this turning point in world history?

Hon. Michael Chan: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Markham-Unionville, I would like to congratulate you on your recent election. I would also like to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for his question and welcome him to the Legislature. I would like to take this moment to extend my profound appreciation to the staff of the ministry that I now lead.

This year, the world is also commemorating the 200th anniversary of the act to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire. Here in Ontario, we have seen the bicentenary as an opportunity to remember, to educate and to commemorate a chapter of our history that was virtually untold. This is why our government is investing \$1 million in community-based projects in this bicentenary year. Our aim is to educate the public about the history of slavery and its abolition in Ontario.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Minister.

The people of Ottawa-Centre have benefited, like many other communities in the province, from the Roots

of Freedom investments that have been made to honour the act to abolish the British slave trade. In Ottawa alone, investments have been made with the Catholic Immigration Centre to bring adults and youth together to explore mentorship and leadership development opportunities for black youth. Leadership Ottawa, a community organization for black individuals, has invested to support a leadership development program. The Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization has been supported to work in conjunction with the Jaku Konbit Academy to engage francophone and anglophone black youth in developing projects on black Canadian contributions to science and technology. Can the minister tell us in what other areas the bicentenary committee has invested?

Hon. Michael Chan: Based on the committee's recommendations, we awarded Roots of Freedom grants to 33 community organizations. Among the many funded projects are programs to showcase the achievements of female artists and the restoration of pioneer cemeteries where many early pioneers are buried. As well, our government opened the Ontario Bicentenary Exhibit just around the corner at 880 Bay Street. It tells the story of the enslaved and those who fought to end this evil. The exhibit closes December 31, and I encourage all of my colleagues to visit.

The bicentenary year is teaching us lessons from the past. In doing so, it is helping Ontarians to build a stronger foundation for the future.

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MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, I've listened to the questions here today and, quite honestly, your bobbing and weaving. The evidence today is that it's reported that Ontario has lost over 160,000 jobs since 2005 in the manufacturing sector. This is really about people and their lives, especially at this time of year, and in the local paper—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I caution the member about what he's about to do.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm reading from an article in the local paper. It's not a prop, Mr. Speaker, with your permission.

In the business section of this week's paper in Durham is the headline, "Layoffs—Actual and Perceived—Wreak Havoc on Lives." This is about a family that's lost 20 years' experience and now are looking for a job. If you look at the response that you've given today as well as recently—one of the terms you've used is "a bit of contraction." Minister, could you tell this House today what plan you have for any certainty in the manufacturing sector in the economy of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We certainly concur that the issue in the manufacturing sector is about families and families that suffer. That's why this government has worked so actively and aggressively over the last two years with the manufacturing sector, with the forestry

sector. The Premier referenced earlier a \$500-million investment, leveraging \$7 billion in new investment, that benefited, I might point out, the GM plant in Oshawa, the Ford and Chrysler plants in Windsor, Chrysler in Brampton, and Toyota.

We acknowledge there's a lot more to do, and we intend to do that. We have already begun the process. As long as one person, one family, needs a job, this government will not rest. As long as one sector is suffering, there remains more to be done. We look forward to the day when manufacturing does as well as computers are doing in Ontario. We look forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: Even the leading economists in this province—RBC and CIBC—say that Ontario will be dead last in Canada with respect to the state of its economy.

In fact, if I look locally again, the headline in another paper says, "Action Centre Opens for Lear Layoffs." Minister, you should know that there are over 1,200 jobs at General Motors, 350 jobs at Lear Siegler, and the additions go on and on with the multiplier effect that we all know. All the answers I've heard today are to blame someone else, and I've heard no substantive plan that you have, not only on policies that you as the Minister of Finance can take, but no plan for Ontario's manufacturing sector. In fact, the prognostications here indicate that Ontario's going to be dead last. Minister, I ask again if you will give us a real plan for real jobs for the people and families of Ontario.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, as long as one family is suffering from a job loss, this government will continue to work for them and with them, just like we did with the OAIS fund, which that member voted against; just like when we moved to accelerate the capital tax reduction, which that member voted against. When we did the \$540-million business education tax, which will help manufacturers, which will help the logging industry, that member voted against it.

I would remind the member that that very organization, Lear—that the support service that's in place has support from the provincial government to help those workers and their families get through this difficult situation. Those workers, those families, can count on this Premier, this government. We only wish they could count on you and your friends in Ottawa.

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: Last July, a fire at the Biedermann Packaging plant in Hamilton sent pesticides into sewers, killing thousands of fish in Spencer Creek. Will the Premier immediately announce a full public inquiry into this environmental and health disaster in Hamilton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank the member for the question. As she well knows, officials of the Ministry of the Environment have worked very, very closely over the last six months, ever since this situation started, in order to deal with the situation. You also noted that under our new proposed toxic reduction law, which we talked about during the campaign, we will include a right-to-know element that isn't currently there.

We continue to follow up with the city of Hamilton to do whatever is necessary to deal with the situation. We've certainly made the individuals and the public at large in Hamilton aware of the circumstances there. We look forward to working with the member, as well, to deal with the situation as expeditiously as possible.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier, the reality is that the city of Hamilton has asked twice for this public inquiry and nothing has been heard at all in regard to this particular disaster. Over 900,000 litres of water saturated with the weed killer diazinon escaped into Spencer Creek and Cootes Paradise, killing thousands of fish, and a raging fire burned before the ministry's air sampling even began.

The city of Hamilton has called for a full public inquiry; I've sent a couple of letters as well. The McGuinty Liberals are simply sitting on their hands in this matter. Hamilton and its residents want to know, will the Premier announce a full public inquiry into the Biedermann fire today?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, all the stakeholders that are involved in this, all the various parties, have been working extremely actively to come up with a restoration plan and to take the appropriate steps that are necessary to deal with the effects that it has had on Spencer Creek. That includes the city of Hamilton, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Hamilton Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Natural Resources, and the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, as well as the company involved. We're working together; we're dealing with the situation. The member well knows that the ministry is involved on a day-to-day basis, and we look forward to the member's involvement in this as well to deal with the situation as soon as possible.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. As a physician, I know that our government has accomplished a great deal for children with autism. Our government has tripled funding and has almost tripled the number of kids receiving IBI. I also know that we've been taking a comprehensive approach to ensure kids with autism get the supports they need.

As I canvassed my riding, I heard from a lot of people wanting to know more about our government's plan for children with autism. I know that in my region there have been special summer camp supports for kids with autism. Can the minister share with this House the details about

this program and the new supports provided by our government this summer?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank my brand new colleague from Oak Ridges–Markham for her question and welcome her to the Legislature. I know she's going to bring tremendous expertise to this job, and we look forward to what I'm sure will be her enormous contribution.

She is right, we have made tremendous progress on the issue of autism. Since our election in 2003, we've removed the age six cut-off that the previous government had imposed on IBI therapy, we've tripled funding and we've almost tripled the number of kids with autism receiving IBI. Since the House rose for the summer, we've continued to improve services for children with autism and their families. I welcome the opportunity to share with you some of this progress.

This past summer, we launched a new program to send kids with autism to summer camp. Eight hundred kids were able to go to camp thanks to this program, 500 went to regular camps with support and 300 went to special autism camps.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As a former board member of Giant Steps Toronto, a school for children with autistic spectrum disorders, I know first-hand the toll the diagnosis takes on families. Can the minister tell us what this government has done to help families cope with this stress?

1520

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks again for your question. Parents of children with autism face enormous emotional and physical challenges every single day. As you mentioned in your first question, we are taking a comprehensive approach to autism in this province, and that includes not only improving services for kids but also for their families.

I'm pleased to tell this House that this summer we also announced that we're providing relief to families in the form of respite services, so they can have a little bit of a break. These services will help 3,000 families. It means families will get a temporary break while their children are in the care of experienced autism providers.

I want to take this opportunity to say to parents of children with disabilities of all types how much we value the work they do. We value their commitment to their children and we will work to help them in this very important challenge they face.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Premier. Premier, since 2005, you have presided over the loss of some 153,500 high-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario. My question for you is simple: Why have you waited until now, almost 2008, to appoint your parliamentary assistant to study the loss of manufacturing jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've asked Mr. Ramsay to give all of us a hand to better understand. As we now

prepare to go even beyond our platform and look for new supports for the manufacturing sector in particular, and the forestry and farming sectors as well—and given that the ground is shifting under our feet all the time—I thought it would be appropriate to ask Mr. Ramsay, a man of considerable ability, to come up with a report in fairly short order, giving me his best advice as to what we can do.

Of course, this will not prevent from us moving ahead on the number of fronts that we've already started, including—and we're particularly enthusiastic about—our next generations job fund. It's a \$1.15-billion fund. It eclipses any similar fund anywhere else in North America. We're sending a powerful signal to the world at large: If you want to come and invest in North America, Ontario is the place you have to come.

Mr. Norm Miller: Under your watch you've also increased corporate taxes by 27%, and that's not helping too much.

Parry Sound–Muskoka has been hard hit by the loss of manufacturing jobs. Recently, the Dura Automotive plant in Bracebridge, which at one time employed 500 people, closed. Cequent Towing Products in Huntsville announced this month, December, that they're closing their plant and moving to the States. That's a loss of another 200 good jobs. Premier, what are you going to do to replace these lost jobs in Parry Sound–Muskoka?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Speaker, congratulations on your appointment.

To the member from Muskoka: I'd like to remind him that the riding he comes from is in fact full of manufacturers that have been watching the benefit of this government's auto investment strategy and advanced manufacturing investment strategy.

What's key for this government is that we have a partner in the federal government to assist us in coming to the aid of the manufacturing sector, which has never seen this number of variables coming together at the same time: like a very high dollar, like energy prices. These are issues that we have been deliberately identifying for the federal government so it can come to the assistance of the most significant sector in Ontario. I will remind the people of Muskoka that when this government has come forward with programs to help the sector, their own MPP voted against those measures.

RETAIL SALES TAX

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Madam Minister, Ontario's ethnic publications—such as *Thòi Báo*, *Latin Life News*, *Iran Javan* and many others—are being squeezed for PST payments because your government, the McGuinty government, says they are magazines and must pay the PST on printing and supply costs. I ask the minister today to stop punishing our ethnic papers, which are sources of essential information for millions of Ontarians. Will the minister

stop charging Ontario's ethnic newspapers PST for their supplies, so they can continue to serve their communities?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to thank the member for Beaches–East York for his question today. This is an issue that we are aware of. The representatives of the Ministry of Finance have met with the Ontario Community Newspapers Association and the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada on this very topic. One of the difficulties we have in defining newspapers is to distinguish them from taxable magazines. Magazines are bound publications typically published less frequently than weeklies, and so we have a problem in distinguishing those. It's a problem of determining what, exactly, is a newspaper. We're working with the community and we'll continue to have those discussions.

Mr. Michael Prue: Madam Minister, the former finance minister already said that he would look into this; now you're saying you're going to look into it. But *Thoi Bao*, a Vietnamese publication whose editor is in the audience here today, has a bill from your ministry for almost \$1 million. The ministry says it needs to print at least five times a week and to stop using staples; with this bill, they will be lucky to print at all. Will the minister end this practice and allow our ethnic media to flourish and put them on the same level as the *Toronto Star* and every other newspaper?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As I said, and perhaps you didn't hear me, member from Beaches–East York, we are in discussions with a variety of organizations that represent ethnic newspapers across the province. We will continue to have these discussions and try to resolve this issue.

PATHWAYS TO EDUCATION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I would also like to congratulate you on assuming your new role in this assembly.

My question is for the Minister of Education. This government believes that the best way to build a stronger Ontario is through investing in our people, and of course, there's no better sign of this than investing in our children. Last month, this government announced an expansion of the very successful Pathways to Education program. The investment of \$19 million over the next four years, along with a \$10-million contribution from the United Way, will allow this program to expand in four communities across the province: Lawrence Heights in Rexdale in my own riding in Toronto and neighbourhoods in Kitchener and Ottawa.

As a result of this expansion of the Pathways to Education program, I believe that we are giving the children of Ontario a better chance at a brighter future. Minister Wynne, I would ask if you might specifically indicate to us what this means for the children of Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Congratulations, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to my colleague for the question, and I am very happy to be in this House to respond. We need every one of our students performing at their highest potential. The Pathways program has demonstrated in Regent Park that they can cut dropout rates, increase graduation rates, wrap services around kids so that they not only graduate from high school but go on to post-secondary. So this investment will help more students. It will directly help students graduate from high school and move on to university and college.

This investment in Pathways is another part of our program to reach our target of having 85% of students graduate from high school. We believe that the best way to build a stronger Ontario is to have every one of our young citizens operating at their highest potential. That's what this investment is about.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As you'll know, the needs of children in one community can often differ greatly from the needs in other communities. From my own experiences on the ground with the Pathways to Education program, I can say that this program is not the implementation of a one-size-fits-all mentality to what is, of course, a very complex and multi-faceted challenge.

What I would ask is, can you, Minister, tell us what the expansion of the Pathways to Education program means specifically to the people and the children in my own riding, in Rexdale in the great riding of Etobicoke North?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member from Etobicoke North is absolutely correct. We can't say exactly what the program will look like, but what we do know is that the students in Rexdale will now have access to things like tutoring in five core subjects four nights a week. They'll have group mentoring for grades 9 and 10 and specialty career mentoring in grades 10, 11 and 12. There will be immediate financial supports, such as free bus tickets, which is often a barrier to kids getting the services they need, and then \$1,000 every year in the program to a total of \$4,000 when the students graduate from high school. There will be student-parent support workshops to help the families grapple with the kinds of supports that kids need in order to make it through high school.

So, although we don't know exactly what the form of the program will be, we know that those services will be available to the kids in Rexdale.

1530

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, Ontario has one of the worst regimes for new business investment in North America, with one of the highest levels of corporate taxation. In fact, according to the C. D. Howe Institute, Ontario has the least competitive business tax structure in all of Canada.

Premier, will the Ontario government follow the federal government's lead—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important to understand something about the level of corporate income taxes in the province of Ontario. The federal government at present is charging a corporate income tax rate of 22%. In five years' time, they're going to reduce it to 15%. The general manufacturing rate today in Ontario is 14%. The manufacturing rate is 12%. What that means is that in five years' time, the federal government still won't have a corporate income tax rate that is as low as it is at present in the province of Ontario. We're leading once again.

Where we could use the support of the federal government is with additional support for our manufacturers, our farmers and our forestry sector, and I'd ask the member opposite to lend her support to those efforts.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again my question is to the Premier. When is this government going to develop a sense of urgency about the desperate situation we have here, stop quoting meaningless statistics and tell us when you're going to do something to make the business climate more amenable to new investment in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Some of the members today have raised the issue, which I think is a really important perspective to have on this: Fundamentally, this is about families, it's about jobs and it's about the sense of pride that parents have when they come home, look their kids in the eye and know that they're contributing and making it on their own.

There are some workers who are caught up in what's happening in our economy and who are losing their jobs, and my concern is this on behalf of those workers: The average Ontario worker is getting \$4,000 less by way of employment insurance than Canadians living in other provinces. What I'm asking the member opposite and the opposition parties to do is to join us in the overture that we're making to the federal government to have them ensure that our unemployed workers are qualified for the same types of benefits as unemployed workers are in the rest of the country. It's time to stand up for Ontario's unemployed workers.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition from Jolley's Dairy Bar and Video in Flesherton, and it's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services, Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale has been promised a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction

date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I've also signed this.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I have a petition, signed by many constituents, to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We would like the government of Ontario to change the legislation regarding the visitation rights of grandparents. Under any family circumstances, grandparents should have visitation rights to their grandchildren unless the grandparents are abusive."

I've affixed my name to this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads as follows:

"Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank; and

"Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

"Therefore we the undersigned petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

"—Repainting the crosswalk;

"—A new overhead flashing light crosswalk sign;

"—The installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and south alerting drivers to reduce speed;" and, along with the municipality of Scugog;"

"Consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone."

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Kim Fewer and many other constituents in the riding of Durham from the community of Greenbank, and present this to page Olivia.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would like to remind the members that—I know this is the first day back and there are conversations that are taking place, but those conversations could be best had outside the chamber. I encourage the discussion, but we need to keep the flow of the chamber moving.

Further petitions? The member for Simcoe North.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is

present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry' type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this and give it to Mara to take to the Clerk.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I add my congratulations on surviving your first question period and for doing a good job.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air

conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

As I've said in this House before, my mother taught at this school for over 33 years and I attended this school from kindergarten to grade 8. During the election this government made an announcement, but we haven't seen any action yet. So I'll give that to the page Diem to give to the table.

1540

GO TRANSIT TUNNEL

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This is to the Parliament of Ontario, the minister of infrastructure services and the Minister of Transportation.

"Whereas GO Transit is presently planning to tunnel an area just south of St. Clair Avenue West and west of Old Weston Road, making it easier for GO trains to pass a major rail crossing;

"Whereas TTC is presently planning a TTC right-of-way along all of St. Clair Avenue West, including the bottleneck caused by this dilapidated St. Clair Avenue-Old Weston Road bridge;

"Whereas this bridge"—which is actually an underpass—"will be: (1) too narrow for the planned TTC right-of-way, since it will leave only one lane for traffic; (2) it is not safe for pedestrians (it's about 50 metres long). It's dark and slopes on both east and west sides, creating high banks for 300 metres; and (3) it creates a divide, a no man's land, between Old Weston Road and Keele Street. (This was acceptable when the area consisted entirely of slaughterhouses, but now the area has 900 new homes);

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that GO Transit extend the tunnel beyond St. Clair Avenue West so that trains will pass under St. Clair Avenue West, thus eliminating this eyesore of a bridge with its high banks and blank walls. Instead it will create a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape with easy traffic flow."

Since I agree with this petition, I am very delighted to sign it.

STRANDHERD-ARMSTRONG BRIDGE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is a very important issue to my constituents.

"Whereas the close-knit communities of Barrhaven, Riverside South and Manotick combined have a population of well over 50,000 people;

"Whereas the only link between Barrhaven and Riverside South across the Rideau River is a lengthy

commute either across the congested Hunt Club bridge or through the village of Manotick, which cannot sustain the traffic;

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has identified the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge as a viable alternative to the traffic congestion created at the Hunt Club bridge and on Bridge Street in Manotick;

"Whereas the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is much more environmentally sustainable as an option for south Ottawa commuters across the Rideau River than either the commute across Manotick or the Hunt Club bridge;

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has identified the cost of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, including all ramps, road work, road widening and bridge work, at \$105 million;

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has requested that a third of this funding, approximately \$35 million, be provided by the Ontario Liberal government and further, that one-third has already been committed by the federal government;

"Whereas the previous Liberal MPP for the community of Riverside South did not act on the need for this bridge, and the current Liberal Premier of Ontario has refused to enter into negotiations with the city of Ottawa over the cost-sharing of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge;

"The residents of Barrhaven, Riverside South and Manotick call on Dalton McGuinty to build the bridge now."

I affix my signature with that of our federal member, Pierre Poliev, and submit this to the Legislature.

IDENTITY THEFT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Chair recognizes the member from Davenport.

Interjections.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I thought we had as much right as the opposition to read petitions. I've got no idea what this obfuscation is over there.

This is a petition to the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services, and I might add, I've got the agreement with our member of Parliament right here to read this petition. It reads:

"To the Parliament of Ontario and the Minister of Government Services:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting ... thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in" this "Legislature ..., be brought before committee and that the

following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and credit card numbers.

"(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

"(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reasons.

"(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate."

Certainly I'm delighted to sign this petition.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: Congratulations on your being elected as Speaker of the Legislature.

"Highway 35 Four-Laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

I'm going to hand it to page Simon.

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, Mr. Speaker, congratulations upon your new position in the assembly.

I'm very pleased to read in a petition about bringing health card renewal services closer to Glanbrook residents. It reads as follows:

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signatures of Sue and Robert Allan, I affix mine in support.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Chair recognizes the member from Davenport.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, and I want you to know that I have the authority from our whip to read this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and the Minister of the Environment:

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminium cans worth \$27 million into landfill every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I am delighted to sign it.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This is again on macular degeneration.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry' type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where

abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Consideration of the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I move, seconded by Mr. Ramsay, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Pendergast moves, seconded by Mr. Ramsay, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

The Speaker recognizes the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations.

I share my time with the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

It is with honour and humility that I accept this opportunity to move the speech from the throne. Thank you. It is with the same honour and humility that I represent the interests of the constituents of Kitchener–Conestoga under the leadership of this Premier.

Kitchener–Conestoga is a new riding. We are a diverse riding. We are rural, we are towns, we are cities. We are hard-working. We are farmers and Mennonites. We are business owners and health care professionals. We are a unique community with a real sense of who we are and how we can make this work for us. I have lived in the community all of my life and I know who we are.

As a cashier at the local Dutch Boy grocery store, I worked my way through local university and graduate school to be a teacher. I began to look out the classroom door to see how I could help in the rest of the school. As an administrator, I looked out the door to see how I could help in the rest of the province. On provincial committees, I looked out the door to see how I could work beyond education and partner with community service agencies and with ministries.

There are many stories that were instrumental in keeping me on the path that brought me here today. One in particular involves my uncle the late Father Russell Pendergast, a Basilian priest and dean of economics at the University of Alberta, who gave me some advice when I was 18 and looking for direction in life. He told me, “Take all the time you need to decide, but do your thinking on a university campus.” That inspired me to complete both my master’s in English literature and my master’s of education.

So it is with pride that I stand here before you today, the product of generations of hard work and struggle. As my Irish grandparents had a dream of a better life, they left their homes and travelled to Canada to settle in Ontario. Their dreams live on in me and in my children. It is a dream of greatness, a dream of the potential of the province of Ontario. It is a dream that continues to insist on small miracles: that our children are fed and safe from harm, that our children are educated and successful at school, that we enjoy the best health care system possible, that we serve the needs of our seniors, that we maintain an environment that protects clean water and air for future generations, and that families can grow and prosper together in Ontario.

I am a mother of three boys, a wife, a daughter, a sister and a cousin. I represent hard-working Ontarians who have seen the changes that have happened in our communities, and I am here to participate in that hard work. I’m here to continue to move forward together to make a difference for the people of Kitchener–Conestoga and for all Ontarians. I am here because I have seen that

these changes are possible and that they work to improve our lives.

I stand before you today because of the advancements of this government under the leadership of Premier Dalton McGuinty. I have seen first-hand, on the front lines, the advancements made by this government in the past four years, and that is what has inspired me to be here today.

I taught English at the high school level for 10 years, and I have been a high school vice-principal for 10 years. I know education. I know what our youth have been through. I know the power that education has to change a life and to emancipate our youth from poverty. To quote John Kennedy: “Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone.”

For 20 years I have been helping youth in Ontario who are at risk—at risk in the struggle against illiteracy and mental health issues; at risk in the struggle against crime and drugs; at risk in the struggle against lack of housing and family problems. But in the past four years in our schools and our communities, we have seen remarkable changes and improvements under the leadership of this government. Our test scores and our graduation rates are up. We have student success programs in place to support children in every way. We have child and youth workers and attendance counsellors. Pathways to Education is providing the four pillars of support that our youth so desperately need. We have anti-bullying programs in every school in a preventive manner, and we are taking a restorative approach to justice. Parents are engaged in their child’s learning and participating in after-school homework help. We are moving forward on full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, and our grade 4 students are world-class.

I’d like to give you an example that may help illustrate the impact this government is having on lives in Ontario. I’ve heard many stories over the years as a teacher and vice-principal, but one that I heard recently sticks with me. It reminds me of a Dickens character, like Oliver Twist or Sydney Carton from *A Tale Of Two Cities*. But this is a true story, so let’s say that this is a story about Sydney Carton. It’s an emotional story, but one thing that I have learned on the front lines is that it’s okay to care that much. Because even if it is not my own child, we have the same responsibility for the success of every child. The stakes are too high not to care that much.

Sydney moved on to high school as an at-risk student. Prior to arrival, each at-risk student received a case conference to meet the needs of the incoming student. It was common knowledge that Sydney was—and I’ll never forget these words—kept in the basement and treated like a dog. He was let out only to go to school and then returned promptly to the basement. He was gentle, kind and naive, and, given his new surroundings in a large secondary school, was more at risk than he had ever been, both academically and socially.

Thanks to the advancements over the past four years of this government, Sydney has access to a child and youth worker and an attendance counsellor. He will continue to have a vice-principal to follow his care. He is receiving credit rescue and credit recovery support. He now has bus tickets to get to and from school and to his probation meetings, and an advocate to stand on his behalf, thanks to Pathways to Education. As I stand before you today, I tell you that Sydney will graduate from high school and move on to post-secondary training and education. As sure as the sun rises, as this government continues on the path we are on, that will happen. This is a far, far better thing we do than we have ever done: *e pluribus unum*; the power of one, one out of many. One caring adult engaged in the life of a child can make a momentous difference. Small things can make a difference. Imagine the power of the combined individual strengths in this chamber as a united front. If we work together and build together, imagine what we can achieve together.

1600

Dr. Emily Werner conducted a remarkable survey in the 1950s, where she studied 50 youth over the course of 30 years. They were at risk and not expected to succeed. After 30 years, four out of five of those individuals had been successful. So when she asked them how they defied the odds, how against all odds they had become contributing members of society, every one of them had the same answer: one caring adult. One caring adult somewhere along the way in their formative years had made contact and supported them and allowed them to believe they mattered and that they could succeed.

Let me ask you a question: Do you believe that the way I treat you can affect your outcome? Michael Feiner conducted a study of 25 youth. He told the students they were all exceptional. They were treated as such; teachers and staff treated them as if they were exceptional. At the end of the term, all 25 students performed at an A or a level four. That was the expectation. What Michael didn't tell them was that they were randomly selected. They were not a group of exceptional students but a group of students who had performed as exceptional because that was the expectation, which reflects without a doubt that, yes, the way I treat you can affect your outcome. I ask each of you to think back to a time in your early years when an adult made a difference in your life, to your memory of that one caring adult. For most of us, what we find is that that adult is in a school setting: a teacher, a principal, a parent helper, a librarian or a bus driver.

This is exactly why we need to focus our efforts on supporting our youth through their formative years, through their education experience, to become contributing members of society; support from cradle to grave. Our youth are competing in a Web-enabled global world. We need to provide for them the tools to compete in a world of research and innovation, in a knowledge-based economy. In this room alone we have many talents and skill sets. I am reminded of the story of Paul Revere,

as conveyed by Malcolm Gladwell. Paul Revere rode out that night, north and west of Boston, to warn that the British were coming, but he was not the only one. Another man rode out that night—same message and distance, directly west of Boston. This man, William Dawes, is virtually unknown because he didn't have what Gladwell refers to as "a rare set of social gifts." Here in this chamber, in every seat, sits that rare set of social gifts with the potential to mobilize this province on so many fronts. If one of us can change the life of a child, imagine the effect we can have when we work together. Roosevelt outlined our task when he said, "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

An education is the foundation of a successful society. We continue to work toward a better-educated, more highly skilled Ontario. We can continue to work together to tackle the greatest threat to our environment, climate change, and turn it into an opportunity to create the next generation of green technology and the good jobs that will come with it. We can continue to build on the Ontario child benefit with a new dental program to help those who need it most, which includes a new cabinet committee to focus on reducing poverty in Ontario and developing a poverty reduction strategy, as outlined in the speech from the throne.

We must continue to shift our philosophy of caring from cleanup to prevention, from illiteracy to learning. We must form these safety nets at the top of the hill before people fall off the cliff into struggles. I'm reminded of Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden only wanted one thing, and that was to be the catcher in the rye to stop all the little children from falling off the edge of the cliff. Our leaders are the catchers in the rye.

The initiatives of this government over the past four years have prevented many Ontarians from poverty, illiteracy and health care concerns. Moving forward together as a government, let us continue to serve the dreams of the people of Ontario. It is with this inspiration and determination that I stand here today with the belief that there are even better days ahead, the belief that we can provide the education and training we need for a stronger, smarter, healthier and greener Ontario.

We can make a better home for our families because at the end of the day, when we get home, they are the only ones there waiting for us. We can make a difference as we work together to build our children for the future. We care enough to carry the dreams of our ancestors into the future of our children. It is with this experience and passionate belief in Ontario and this government that I move we accept the speech from the throne.

Mr. David Ramsay: The first thing I'd like to do is congratulate my new colleague on her maiden speech, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, a beautiful part of the world. I know you'll do a great job, and you've started that off today with a most fabulous maiden speech. I thank you very much. It's very nice for your family to

share in that, and we welcome you here. You've got a politician in the family now.

I was going to congratulate the Speaker on his election. Mr. Speaker of right now, you could pass that on to him, if you will. That would be great.

I'd also like to congratulate all the members here today on their election, whether they were re-elected—but especially the new members. We've got an incredible crop of new members here, which I think bodes well for the democratic process in this province. We're renewing in this place and it's wonderful, members of all sides.

I say to people who ask me for advice whether they should run or not that it's one of the greatest responsibilities you could have in a democracy, to get involved politically, whether that means going door to door on behalf of a candidate or setting up signs or working in a committee room or campaign headquarters. It's all very, very important. But to those of you—and those who didn't make it here today—who put your name up and represent your political party or run as an independent, that's huge, and democracy needs you. Thank you very much to everybody who has done that, because it's very important. As Winston Churchill said, it's not the most perfect of systems but the best that we have. It really does work.

When kids and classes are here—and you'll see them come later on in the year; we'll have classrooms here. Sometimes we get criticized for some of the shenanigans that happen here, but that's how we, in an organized way, let off a little steam. You look at the news every night and you see how some other jurisdictions in the world settle disputes. We're very, very blessed to have such a mature British parliamentary system in the greatest province in the best country in the world.

1610

This is the 39th Parliament, and I would say to the new people as well as the veterans, we're here because we're activists. We're not here because we get up in the morning and say, "Yes, this is a great place." We say that it's the greatest province in the best country in the world, but you know what? We can make it better. We on this side and the people on that side all have ideas about how they can make it better.

I think the leader of the official opposition today said it very well at the beginning of his remarks, that while we have differences of opinions, we're all here for the same principle: We all want to improve Ontario. The only differences we have here are that we might have various perspectives on that and how we go about it. But we all want the best for our families and for our children. And when we're talking about issues today such as the environment, we're now thinking of our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren, because we have big responsibilities on our shoulders today.

The previous speaker, from Kitchener-Conestoga, talked about her involvement in education. I think that's very appropriate, that we had an educator lead off the speech today, because if you look back at the first term of

the McGuinty government, Premier McGuinty wanted to be known—his main emphasis was on education.

When I talk to people in my riding about that, sometimes people are taken aback, especially if you have an older audience: "Are you telling me that education is actually your first priority?" I said, "Yes, that has been the first priority of this government." A lot of people would think, "Well, isn't it health?" Health is extremely important and it's a very close number two. But they ask, "Well, why is it education?" The reason is that education is an investment in our future, and that's why Premier McGuinty places it number one. He's investing in our children, but by doing that he's investing in our economy.

As the Premier always says, "There are people around the world that just want to eat our lunch." There are people in countries with populations millions larger than our jurisdiction of 12.5 million that quite frankly are willing to work 30 hours a day, if you will, to defeat us economically. So the only way, with 12.5 million people here, that we're going to survive and prosper and to develop the revenues we need for the great programs that we have in this province, is to work smarter. And the only way to do that is to invest in our people.

So we start at the very youngest of age. We've seen that with the smaller classroom sizes in the last term. Now we're looking at extending the school term into the lower grades, so that four and five year olds can have full-day school—again, no better investment could we make, not only in our children but in the future of the economy of this province. It's a great initiative and we all look forward to contributing to and being part of that.

I'd like to touch upon a few things that are of interest to me personally, not only to the region that I come from but with the new assignment that I was tasked with by the Premier as of last week. I'm no stranger to this House because this is my seventh term. I come from northern Ontario, but I grew up in the south originally; I went up north in 1972. I was first elected in 1985, and I continue to enjoy this job and the responsibility and the privilege of representing the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane.

We have particular challenges in northern Ontario that we don't have here, though I must say—relating to the task that I now have—we also have some very tough economic challenges in southern Ontario with its manufacturing base. I will talk about that a little bit later.

One of the best things we did as a Liberal government—I'm going to go back now to the Peterson government—was to establish the northern Ontario heritage fund. The idea of that fund was to establish a fund of money that would help compensate for the resources that were extracted from the ground and taken to other jurisdictions. We did that. Why I want to mention that now, besides it being a very successful program, is that the McGuinty government has committed—and reiterated in the throne speech as of last week—to increase the amount of that money, from \$60 million a year to \$100 million a year. I look forward to working with the new Minister of Northern Development and Mines and

discussing at the northern caucus meeting tomorrow morning and in other opportunities how we might engage northerners about how that money could be best invested in northern Ontario.

I'll tell you some of my ideas right now. While our number one criteria in northern Ontario, like it is becoming right here now, is making sure we have job retention and job creation, we have to also look at our society, that we round out the opportunities for people's lifestyle in their various communities. I think it's a wonderful opportunity to take a look at cultural and recreational investments in our communities too, so that we can help retain the young people in our communities so that we can better our communities to make them more liveable, more enjoyable and attractive to live in. This is something I want to certainly engage in with the minister.

Another area that's a really great success story in northern Ontario, as it is in the south, is that agriculture is probably the most growing and sustainable part of our economy in northern Ontario. It's going to become more and more important right across this province as we enter into a bioeconomy. We're now seeing great pressures placed on our economy because of the high price of crude oil. Of course, this is not only just used as an energy resource, but many of our materials are produced from crude oil. When crude was at \$12, \$20, \$22 and \$25—and that was only a few years back—we just took this resource for granted and, in fact, we squandered it.

We understand now that we're putting up carbon that was deposited way below the earth's crust in the dinosaur time, and we know we need to find alternatives to that. We know we're going to run out of that in 50 years, but the high prices now and the concern for climate change are driving an agenda to start to move much more quickly on developing a bioeconomy. This is going to bode very well for jurisdictions like Ontario, which has a tremendous landscape where we can grow materials. Northern Ontario itself is as big as British Columbia. Ontario is the second-largest geographic jurisdiction in this country, and most of it is arable land. In Ontario what's great is that we have a confluence of agricultural and forestry biomass. So we have great resources today that we can start to utilize to create the new economy, to create the new energy sources and the new materials.

An example of that is that soon we will be making interior door car panels in Ontario that are 50% soybean oil plastic and 50% wood waste. That's the type of technology that's developed in Ontario. We can produce all those raw materials in Ontario and that helps contribute to a lighter automobile, which will make that car more efficient. For the climate change agenda, that's where we have to be heading.

We have a bright future because we've got the innovation, the know-how and—unlike some jurisdictions, like desert countries, for example, they're not going to be able to grow things. It's going to be those jurisdictions that can grow crops, whether it be trees or agricultural crops, that will be the new wealth generators of the future. So we're well blessed and well positioned for the

future economy, and I look forward to that and helping, with my colleagues, in playing a role in that.

We've had tough times in forestry in northern Ontario. It came up again today—an industry that is in transition. A few things that are happening there are, of course, that we're seeing less and less consumption of newspapers nowadays, so the consumption of newsprint is in steady decline. In the old days, these things were cyclical based on economic cycles. For newsprint, that's no longer so as we are getting our news now from many other types of sources—digital and electronic sources. That's changing, so we're going to have to be changing in the paper area of forestry into new products.

We're lucky in Ontario because we have the highest quality fibre from our black spruce and other species that you can't replicate in the tropics. You can do cheap tissue-like fibres in the tropics, but you can't produce high quality fine papers like you can in a jurisdiction like Ontario.

When it comes to lumber—one of the biggest areas—that is cyclical. We know what's happened to the United States' housing market. We feel that here, and that's hurting. That's going to take at least two years to clean up, but a new sort of entity in forestry is going to be probably the chemical industry. Now wood cellulose is going to be a new source for material and energy and pharmaceuticals. So we're going to have a new player on the scene and a new demand for our wood products.

The good thing about that is, we need to be growing more trees and we need to be utilizing those products and sequestering that carbon in those products. We look at our desks here—I don't know exactly from the Clerk's office how old these desks are, but some, I think, go from the beginning of the last century. Some of these desks are as old as some of the members here in the House, I believe; maybe even older.

Interjection: Possibly older.

Mr. David Ramsay: Possibly older.

Interjection: It says "1870" on this.

Mr. David Ramsay: There: 1870 right there. What's interesting is, the carbon is sequestered in this wood—hopefully for many more years—just like the carbon in the 2x4s in your house, and hopefully they're going to last for years and years. So the more we can plant and utilize and store in forest products, the more carbon we are going to be able to sequester. So in the medium and long term it's going to be great, great news for agriculture and for forestry.

Before I sit down, I just want to talk about the task the Premier has given me as of last week, as that seemed to be the subject du jour today as it is probably the greatest challenge facing the economy in the short term in Ontario. We all know of the challenges that have impacted our manufacturing sector over the last few years. Anybody six months ago who would have said to you, "Do you realize that in six months the value of the Canadian dollar will be \$1.10 American?"—you would have thought they were crazy. But look at what happened about three weeks ago. We're now at par, a little below

par, but it's probably going to stay in this area for quite a while, which is a heck of an adjustment for many, many of our manufacturers.

They're having a tough time, so I was very pleased when the Premier asked me to take a look, in the very short term, at what we could do with our small and medium-sized manufacturers in helping them through this, and see if we can bring some creative and innovative ideas to help this industry. I look toward meeting with all my colleagues and with people from the opposition. I'm meeting with some union reps tomorrow, and people from manufacturing associations and some decision makers from some of the companies. I look forward to this engagement over the next few weeks, and hope to accelerate the timetable to bring some ideas to the Minister of Finance, whom I am going to meet with next. This has to be job one for this government right now.

We are very well blessed with a very diverse economy in Ontario, and 15% of it is manufacturing. You could say that this is a small percentage, but they are very high-paying jobs. A million people are employed in manufacturing in this province, and they are some of the highest-paying jobs in this province. They're worth defending, they're worth protecting and, quite frankly, they're worth growing. We've got to be rolling up our sleeves, as we said today, and get to work on this. So I look forward to working with all my colleagues on that—the Premier and the Minister of Finance especially—and

helping our manufacturers be able to survive and to prosper, because if we don't have a strong economy, we're not going to have a strong society.

We have been well blessed by that in Ontario, and because of that strong economy we have the most wonderful programs in the world. Ontarians are very, very lucky to have the jurisdiction that we do with the beautiful geography and the strong economy. It's just a great place to live and to raise our children. I think everybody in this House could agree to that. We all need to work together to continue to make it the best place in the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock, Tuesday, December 4.

The House adjourned at 1624.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
 Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
 Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
 Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / procureur general
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges-Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouveau de l'infrastructure publique
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Hon. / L'hon. Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**First Session, 39th Parliament**Assemblée législative
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(Hansard)****Tuesday 4 December 2007****Mardi 4 décembre 2007**Speaker
Honourable Steve PetersPrésident
L'honorable Steve PetersClerk
Deborah DellerGreffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 4 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 4 décembre 2007

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Dave Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This evening at 6 o'clock in room 228 there will be an event on behalf of the World Society for the Protection of Animals, and we're all invited to see an award that's being given out. I would seek unanimous consent of this House, for today only, to wear a ribbon to designate such an event that's happening this evening. It's in favour of protecting our animals on the planet. I seek unanimous consent that the ribbons be worn today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Brant seeks unanimous consent to wear a ribbon in commemoration of an event taking place here at the Legislature today. Is there agreement? Agreed.

Agreed to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Whenever we do this—I have no objection—we should have a bit of a discussion among the whips ahead of time so that we know what's coming. I know the member would like to have done that but is no longer in that capacity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Timmins–James Bay on that point of order. I think he offers a very good suggestion to all members of the House. Sometimes we've seen opportunities where ribbons are on one side or another and the other members do not have possession of them. So I would encourage discussions either among the whips, or perhaps it's an item the House leaders can address as well. I thank the member for that.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARIE NIELSEN

Mr. Frank Klees: Joining us in the members' gallery today is nine-year-old Marie Nielsen and her mother, Bente. We welcome them.

Like other young people, Marie loves pets, and especially Jack Russell terriers, which she began to train. Through her commitment and dedication to what she loves to do, Marie became the recipient of the prestigious

Canadian and American national Jack Russell trial child handler of the year award.

These awards represent a special public acknowledgement for her innovative hard work by leaders in her field of interest on both sides of the border. That Marie accomplished this at the age of nine is a further tribute to her willingness to work hard and her dedication to excellence, qualities that indeed deserve to be recognized by all of us at her age of nine. Congratulations to you, Marie.

On behalf of all members of the House, I join with Marie's family, her friends and her community in proudly congratulating her on her achievement. We wish her well as she pursues her passion. Marie is truly an example to other members of our community and especially young people. We welcome you here today.

AUGUSTINE TIMOTHY DEBASSIGE

Mr. Michael A. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to do is to congratulate you on taking your post.

Augustine Timothy Debassige: Gus Debassige passed away in his 80th year at Sudbury Regional Hospital Memorial site on November 27. Gus was my friend and supporter. He was a well-known business person at M'Chigeeng First Nation. He was a determined hard worker in business, in the affairs of his community, in the affairs of the broader aboriginal community and in politics.

He had worked as a young man on hydro projects near Thessalon, in Sudbury and even in Pakistan. When he came back home to West Bay, as it was known then, he was determined to make a difference. He was the chief from 1959 until 1969 and then for many years thereafter he served on council. Gus wanted a progressive community.

He was a close friend and confidante of Lester B. "Mike" Pearson, who was the member for Algoma East and the Prime Minister of Canada. Gus had a direct line to Mr. Pearson, as he had to Maurice Foster, Brent St. Denis and myself. The erection of 8-by-4 plywood home-made red signs at M'Chigeeng signalled the start of every general election.

Gus was an ardent sports fan. He loved baseball, hockey and playing pool.

Gus will be missed. Our sympathies go out to his wife, Loretta, children Janette and Blair, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren.

Gus, well done—a life well lived.

FIRE IN WASAGA BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to extend my sincere appreciation to Fire Chief Mike McWilliam and the 94 firefighters from Wasaga Beach, Clearview, Essa, Springwater, Collingwood, Tiny and Oro-Medonte who courageously came to the rescue after last week's devastating fire in my home town of Wasaga Beach. I also want to thank Mayor Cal Patterson and his team for their very helpful response during and since the fire.

This is an overwhelming loss for Wasaga Beach. A piece of our heritage vanished last week but our memories will always remain. Thankfully nobody was hurt in the fire, which wiped out roughly 80% of the historic boardwalk and pedestrian mall, with many of the buildings dating back to the 1940s.

As Bill Jory wrote in the *Toronto Sun*, "Wasaga Beach, as symbolized by the boardwalk, has always been more than a beachside town; it's a state of mind evoking visions of endless summer and recurring youth."

But we must not forget that Wasaga Beach is more than just a strip of manmade developments. To quote Thelma Morrison, "Wasaga Beach is a very special place. Anyone who has ever walked its shoreline, admiring the endless sweep of its beach, the expanse of its bay, the misty backdrop of the distant Blue Mountains, knows the unique character of Wasaga Beach. We could wander the world without coming across a scene so compelling, so memorable in its appeal."

Today I am calling upon the government to provide all necessary assistance to Mayor Cal Patterson and his council and the business owners who have suffered an immeasurable loss.

1340

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It has now been some nine weeks where riders across northeastern Ontario who rely on the Ontario Northland bus services have been without services because of an ongoing labour dispute. Myself, my colleague the member for Nickel Belt, our critic M^{me} France G  linas, along with our leader, Howard Hampton, have been calling on this government to take some action to intervene so we can get the buses back on the road in order to put people back where they need to be when it comes to travelling for medical services or for pleasure or business.

I note, finally, that there's been some movement on the part of the ONTC. I have to hope that the government has intervened, through Minister Gravelle or the Premier, calling people back to the table to negotiations. By the grace of the weather yesterday in northern Ontario, negotiations were unable to start because of travel problems with storms and such; that made it difficult for people to get in.

I want to put this government on notice: If we're not able to resolve this particular strike at the bargaining table, I say to you now we need to send this off to binding arbitration. The union is onside. It's something that needs to be done. We cannot be put in a position of not having the buses on the road as we enter into this holiday season. For those who must travel for medical reasons, this is causing huge hardship across northeastern Ontario, and I put the government on notice now that if we're not able to resolve this at the bargaining table, we need to move this off to binding arbitration in order to resolve this issue.

ONTARIO TRILLIUM FOUNDATION

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: This month the Ontario Trillium Foundation announced Trillium grants in the riding of Huron-Bruce totalling over \$270,000 that will be invested through seven separate grants.

Just to explain about some of the projects receiving monies, they included the Huron County Child Abuse Prevention Committee that received a grant of \$67,800 over two years to develop, implement and evaluate the Rural Father Involvement pilot project, which is a community-based project to help uncover and prevent the causes of child abuse and neglect in Huron county. The Lions Club of Lucknow received \$50,000 towards making the front entrance of the Lucknow arena fully accessible and to improve the building's energy efficiency. The community of Lucknow has undertaken efforts to raise the remaining \$50,000 needed for the project and has already reached \$30,000 of that through one community fundraiser. Other grant recipients included the Lions Club in Formosa. They received \$32,200 in order to replace playground equipment at the Formosa Lions Park. The township of Huron-Kinloss received \$45,000 to renovate the Lucknow library. The Teeswater Lions Club received \$15,000 to put towards the publication of a history book on the townships. The Kincardine Legion branch received \$15,000 towards renovation costs to its facilities as well.

As a member of a rural riding, this money will be greatly appreciated by the communities to reinforce our strong rural communities.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Laurie Scott: This morning the Environmental Commissioner released his annual report and delivered yet another lump of coal to Dalton McGuinty and his "all talk and no action" environmental record. Unfortunately, what the Environmental Commissioner reported was not news to this side of the House. The Liberals have no real plan to manage growth in Ontario, nor do they take the challenge seriously.

The report indicates that the Liberal government needs to step back and rethink its strategy. So far, the Liberal strategy is twofold: "Don't worry, be happy," and "Don't worry, blame someone else." When faced with the

serious questions about the environmental impact that his poor plans have thrust upon the province, the Minister of Public Infrastructure makes an embarrassing attempt to blame the federal government once again.

The minister is quoted in the *Globe and Mail* saying, "The federal government are the ones who decide what the immigration levels are." We aren't sure if the minister is also trying to blame new Canadians for his failings, but we are aware of the strategy of saying, "This is everyone's fault but mine."

Today's report showed we need real action to address challenges in urban growth in Ontario. That means getting on with more transit and more energy. It means funding our infrastructure properly so that we don't have wooden pipes in Toronto, and firefighters in Kingston don't have to colour-code their fire hydrants based on the deterioration of the pipes that lead to them. It means having the courage to respond to the aging water and waste water infrastructure in this province. It means taking responsibility for the challenges that come with being government.

It's time to stop the blame game. Take the Environmental Commissioner's recommendations seriously.

JOHNNY LOMBARDI

Mr. Mike Colle: The city of Toronto has proclaimed today as Johnny Lombardi Day. This evening, there will be the first screening of a biographical film entitled Johnny Lombardi: The Great Communicator.

Johnny Lombardi was a pioneer of multicultural broadcasting in Canada. As the founder of CHIN Radio, he broadcast in over 30 languages, ensuring all of our diverse communities were given an opportunity to celebrate and honour their cultural heritage and at the same time imploring them to be passionate about their adopted country, Canada.

Johnny Lombardi was truly a great Canadian who during World War II was an army sergeant who served in France, Germany and Holland, and was part of Canada's D-Day invasion at Juno Beach. Johnny Lombardi dedicated his whole life to making Canada a welcoming home for all. On this day, December 4, his birthday, we salute his accomplishments and his legacy of respect and equal opportunity for all.

Having grown up in Little Italy myself, I had the privilege of knowing and learning from Johnny Lombardi—how deeply he loved people from all parts of the world and how he wanted to ensure they were fully participating citizens in this remarkable country called Canada.

Johnny Lombardi tonight will be the subject of an amazing new documentary film on his life, the life of a pioneer of multiculturalism and diversity, and a great broadcasting pioneer. "Fai na bonna jobba," he would say: "Do a good job."

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd appreciate if we could finish the members' statements, allow that to pass, and then I will come back to your point of order. Thanks.

RIDING OF ETOBICOKE-LAKESHORE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating you on your new role, as well as congratulating all of my colleagues on all sides of the House, new and re-elected, for being here to advocate on behalf of their communities.

I'm so pleased to be back in the Legislative Assembly representing the people of Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Over the past four years, I am proud of the progress we have made across the province and in particular in my community in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. Investments in health care, education and the economy have resulted in stronger communities across our province. Class sizes are smaller, test scores are up, more students are graduating, and schools are getting much-needed repairs. In Etobicoke-Lakeshore, schools are being built, renovated, expanded and repaired, and Humber College is restoring building space and creating more student spaces, all as a result of increased investments made by the province.

As a lakefront community, we are so proud of the revitalization taking place and the recognition of our small businesses through a community partnership undertaken by the joint BIAs, the Lakeshore Community Partnership and myself in a program recognizing our gems of the lakeshore, something we are so proud to have so many of. We look forward to expanding and building upon this recognition program in the years ahead.

We've come a long way, and now, in last week's throne speech, we've laid out our plan to ensure that progress continues in Ontario and that we keep moving forward. It's an ambitious plan. It is one that will be good for my community in Etobicoke-Lakeshore. I look forward to undertaking that work in the years ahead.

CHRIS GARRETT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate you on your new role. We look forward to a great four years.

I stand before you today to share my plea to honour a hero from my riding, Northumberland-Quinte West. Constable Chris Garrett saved the lives of countless civilians and fellow officers on May 15, 2004, the same day he lost his life in the line of duty.

The Governor General and Prime Minister Harper have denied awarding this man the Cross of Valour due to a technicality. I'm here to tell you today, along with Premier McGuinty and over 28,000 Canadians who have signed an online petition, that an act of bravery has no expiry date. I will be presenting a resolution to this Legislature calling for Stephen Harper and Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean to accept the responsibility that this dead-

line is unreasonable. Prime Minister Harper has the ability to change this legislation, and today I'm calling on him to do just that. Award Constable Garrett the Cross of Valour that he deserves; recognize this fine man for his undeniable act of courage and heroism.

I signed the petition and I urge every member of this House to do so. They can go online to www.PetitionOnline.com/05142004/.

1350

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—and congratulations again, by the way. I want to introduce to the House some amazing people from my riding. From the Parkdale Liberty Economic Development Corp., Bill Squires, Melody Brice and Jessica Hum are here. They are responsible for changing the face of Parkdale, one storefront at a time, with Operation Storefront. So welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As the member knows, that isn't a point of order, but we would like to welcome you and thank you for the nice Christmas decorations that you are selling and that I purchased. It gracefully hangs on the Speaker's Christmas tree.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I wonder if you can join me with the rest of my colleagues in this House to congratulate my seatmate, Lou Rinaldi, on his 60th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I know all members of the House are very proud of the occasion you have reached, member from Northumberland—Quinte West. Happy birthday from all of us.

VISITORS

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I am pleased today to welcome into the House—do you remember Joshua? Joshua Rosenkrantz was one of our pages. His sister now has joined us as a page as well. So I'd like to say welcome to her mum, Pat, and to her dad, David, and to her friends Kelly and Vanessa as well, from Humber Valley Village school in the great riding of Etobicoke Centre.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: A historic occasion today—the member from Oxford celebrates a birthday. We have no idea which one it is because he refuses to tell us. Perhaps you can ask him to share that information with the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member, and we too wish you a happy 29th birthday—is that it, member from Oxford?—and many more.

VISITOR

Mr. Dave Levac: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Earlier we gave permission in this House to wear a ribbon. I would like to introduce in the gallery, on the west side, Melissa Tkachyk, the programs officer for the World Society for the Protection of Animals, here for this evening's festivities at 6 o'clock in room 228.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to the parents of the pages who are here. It's a real pleasure to have you here. It's also a pleasure for me to ask all members of this Legislature to welcome this group of legislative pages for our 39th Parliament. I would ask each of the pages to please join us on the floor. This is a process that former Speaker Brown initiated and I think it's a wonderful tradition. The former Speaker planted a good seed and it's one that we're going to continue:

First, Nikita Arora from Brampton—Springdale; Mara Badali from St. Paul's; Christian Campbell, Ottawa—Orléans; Quinton Eaton—Almondm, Perth—Wellington; Simon Harmgardt, Oakville; Parker Hickey, Timmins—James Bay; Odessa Kelebay, Etobicoke—Lakeshore; David Lewis, Don Valley East; Marisa Musing, Beaches—East York; Shawn Okum, Guelph; Olivia Paty, Whitby—Oshawa; Jordan Freedman Pollock, Trinity—Spadina. Jordan, of course, is the son of our good friend at the table Lisa, and we're proud of that. Leah Rosenkrantz, Etobicoke Centre; Laura Rudback, Ajax—Pickering; Annie St. Marseille, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry; Chris Stoner, Huron—Bruce; Émile Vercouteren, Chatham—Kent—Essex; Andrew Vettese, Eglinton—Lawrence; Diem Vu, Parkdale—High Park; and the daughter of a former member, Tiana Wildman, Algoma—Manitoulin.

On behalf of all the members and all the staff here at the Legislative Assembly, we thank you for participating in the page program and we trust that you will learn a lot over your two weeks here. Resume your posts, please.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL
COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table the 2006-07 Annual Report of the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

ROYAL ASSENT
SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide reservist leave and the Health Insurance Act to eliminate the waiting period for military families / Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin de prévoir un congé pour réservistes et la Loi sur l'assurance-santé afin d'éliminer la période d'attente pour les familles des militaires.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Standing order 62(a) provides that "the standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year."

The House not having received a report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, November 15, 2007, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b) the estimates before the committee of the Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ministry of the Attorney General, Cabinet Office, Ministry of Children and Youth Services, Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Ministry of Culture, Democratic Renewal Secretariat, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Finance, Office of Francophone Affairs, Ministry of Government Services, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ministry of Health Promotion, Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs, Ministry of Labour, Office of the Lieutenant Governor, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, Office of the Premier, Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Ministry of Research and Innovation, Ministry of Revenue, Ministry of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Ministry of Transportation, Office of the Assembly, Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, and Ombudsman of Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 60, the estimates, 2007-08, of these ministries and offices have not been selected for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed adopted.

1400

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

KATELYN BEDARD BONE MARROW
AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2007

LOI KATELYN BEDARD DE 2007
SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION
AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

Mr. Crozier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: The short title of this bill will be the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act. The creation of the bill was inspired by Katelyn Bedard and her parents, Joanne and Bryan, who are founders of the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association.

As we know, there are too many deaths in this country and in this province because of the lack of awareness about what bone marrow transplants can do to save lives. We hope that this bill, if passed, will help make people more aware.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (WAGE SECURITY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(SÉCURITÉ SALARIALE)

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program / Projet de loi 6, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin d'établir un programme de sécurité salariale des employés.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to congratulate the Speaker on his appointment.

This bill protects the workers in our province. This bill is long overdue. When corporations close, pull out of our province and go back to their countries of origin, people are left with devastation in their communities. They lose their severance packages, there's a tax on their pension

plans and they lose their benefits. This is unacceptable, and it's time that our government address this issue immediately.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE
MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We in the New Democratic Party believe that \$10.25 an hour in three years is far too little, far too late. We believe that if this government is serious about addressing the problems of poverty in our midst, they will do what thousands of Ontarians have asked—labour unions, anti-poverty activists—and raise the minimum wage now, and also index it to the consumer price index as well. That is why I've introduced this bill. We need action, not another cabinet committee.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Government House leader.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Bryant: House leader, he said.

Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent, and therefore I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bryant seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 1, 2, 3 and 4 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), notice for ballot items 1, 2, 3 and 4 be waived. Agreed? Agreed.

Agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WORLD AIDS DAY JOURNÉE MONDIALE DU SIDA

Hon. George Smitherman: Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to add my voice to those who have offered congratulations on your selection.

I rise in my place today to talk briefly about World AIDS Day, which was marked this past Saturday. In some ways, it's entirely appropriate that I should have the opportunity to talk about AIDS not on the actual preordained day when everyone dutifully talks about it but on another day, because while we may care about December 1 and the fact that that is World AIDS Day, AIDS in itself doesn't care at all.

Stephen Lewis, who in many ways has become a Canadian symbol of the battle against AIDS, has spoken of the great rage that he feels when he thinks of the thousands and millions who have died. He has called it a failure of leadership, and so it is. Mr. Lewis's focus is Africa, where the face of AIDS is female and frequently terribly, terribly young.

But even here in our Ontario, the numbers still have the power to raise serious concern. Twenty-five thousand people in this province are living with HIV—between 1,500 and 2,000 new infections every year. Every one of us in this chamber knows someone: our friends, our lovers, our brothers, our sisters, our sons, our daughters—we all know them. And the scary thing is, not only do we know people who are aware that they are living with this disease, but chances are we know people who don't have a clue that they are. An estimated 30% of the people living with HIV are undiagnosed. The story of AIDS today is, I am grateful to say, one of leadership paying attention.

Je pense que nous sommes en train de faire des progrès dans nos efforts de traitement de ceux qui sont touchés par le SIDA et pour enrayer la propagation de la maladie.

In this province, I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished. We have built a strong community-based infrastructure of more than 90 HIV and AIDS projects and organizations. Recently, we introduced a new province-wide rapid-point-of-care HIV testing program that will offer Ontarians the opportunity to obtain an HIV test and a result on the spot. At the same time, we have expanded our anonymous testing program to include 50 sites across the province of Ontario, where Ontarians at highest risk for HIV can obtain an HIV test. These sites are tremendously important because the stigma of AIDS is still such that anonymous testing is frequently the only way to get people in so they can find out if they are or are not infected.

1410

As well, last year alone we spent more than \$71 million on HIV/AIDS drugs through the Ontario drug benefit program, which includes the Trillium drug program.

Today, I'm pleased to announce that our government has approved funding for Isentress, the first of a new class of anti-retroviral drugs for HIV/AIDS. Isentress meets a compelling medical need for new anti-retroviral treatments, given the increasing prevalence of drug-resistant HIV. Acknowledging this need, the ministry's expert committee reviewed Isentress through the new rapid review process. Within one week of Isentress receiving its notice of compliance from Health Canada, we're ready to provide funding through the Ontario public drug programs for Isentress on an exceptional access basis.

Notre province est de toute évidence un chef de file en matière de collaboration entre les secteurs et les disciplines afin de concentrer l'expertise nécessaire sur les problèmes que nous devons résoudre pour renforcer notre action face à cette épidémie.

L'Ontario réunit des chercheurs sur le SIDA, des responsables de l'élaboration des politiques, des responsables de la santé publique, des organismes communautaires de santé et des services sociaux ainsi que des personnes vivant avec le SIDA afin de collaborer à déterminer l'orientation stratégique de notre action.

The theme of this year's World AIDS Day was leadership—because leadership is what we must have if we are going to finally win this battle and wipe this disease from the face of the earth.

Now is not the time to shrink from this ambitious objective nor is it the time to pit one initiative against another. That is why I'm calling on the federal Minister of Health to immediately reverse his decision to cut funding of HIV/AIDS initiatives in Ontario by 30%. That decision is totally unacceptable and it is unfairly singling out the province of Ontario and its people. We all know that there is enough money for the federal government to maintain current funding levels and invest new money in vaccine development as they have promised.

This is one of the rare issues that we face in this Legislature about which I know we don't have to be partisan. We all believe the same thing; we just need to remind ourselves, and each other, once in a while.

That's what I'm doing here today: I'm asking my colleagues and all Ontarians to continue showing leadership to others and to continue to expect leadership from others. We do that, and we'll help change the world for the better.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT RENDEMENT SCOLAIRE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I rise in the House today to highlight our recent progress in helping more students achieve their full potential.

Je suis très fier des améliorations que nous avons apportées à l'éducation pour aider les élèves à réussir.

Since the start of the school year, we've funded more than 1,000 additional elementary teachers to further reduce class sizes. We've also expanded high school

programs that allow students to explore careers and customize their education. And we've created new teaching resources focused on environmental education, autism and English as a second language.

In addition, there are thousands of construction projects completed or under way to make our schools safer and healthier places to learn. And this summer, we announced an additional \$182 million for the current school year, in addition to the \$781-million funding increase announced last March.

Our government is committed to ensuring that our publicly funded schools have the resources they need to help our students succeed. These results, coupled with the hard work being done every day by Ontario's teachers, administrators and support staff, has resulted in higher student achievement. In fact, Ontario students are now performing among the best in the world in reading, math and science.

Just within the past week we've seen the scores from two international studies released. Ontario results of the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study showed Ontario's nine- and 10-year-old students rank among the top students in the world in reading. Only the Russian Federation and Hong Kong were in a performance range higher than Ontario. And a second study—this one from the Programme for International Student Assessment—found that our province's 15-year-old students are achieving excellent results in science. In overall science, only Finland and Hong Kong/China were in a performance range higher than Canada. Within Canada, only Alberta was in a performance range higher than Ontario.

The top performance of Ontario's youth shows that we are equipping our students with the tools that they need to succeed in the competitive global economy of the 21st century. These high scores are because our students, parents, educators and government are working together.

I ask my colleagues and the good citizens of Ontario to join me in saluting our educators—not just today but throughout the year every day. They provide our students with the tools and knowledge they need to be successful in life. They encourage and inspire our children, provide strong leadership and support our school communities. I encourage everyone to nominate an extraordinary educator for a Premier's Award for Teaching Excellence. These awards are a great way to say thank you to those who keep our schools safe and healthy and who help our students reach their full potential. Nominations for the Premier's awards will be accepted until January 28, 2008.

Our government has made major strides in education. We know there's more work to be done. Each year, our government consults with its education partners across the province and asks for their input. We now have a foundation for success and we have to keep moving forward. That's why we have appointed a special adviser to recommend the best way to implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, and that's why we're working to reduce the barriers facing students in at-risk

communities by dramatically expanding the successful Pathways to Education initiative and by investing attention and resources in schools in marginalized neighbourhoods.

Nous continuerons de collaborer avec les parents et les éducatrices et éducateurs pour améliorer le rendement des élèves. Nous voulons faire en sorte qu'un nombre toujours croissant de jeunes obtiennent leur diplôme d'études secondaires et réussissent dans la vie.

Our government is committed to helping our students reach their full potential by making Ontario's publicly funded education system the very best it can be.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

SECTEUR MANUFACTURIER

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'd like to start by saying how delighted I am to be back in the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and I look forward to continuing to strengthen Ontario's economic advantage.

Since our government took office in 2003, it has been one of our top priorities to shape a globally competitive environment and innovative economy. Over four short years, we believe we have delivered on many of those fronts: Hundreds of thousands of new jobs have been created; we've invested an historic \$1.7 billion in our innovation and commercialization program to turn great ideas into great jobs, products and services; and I'm proud that every year more than 140,000 newcomers are choosing Ontario as the best place to open up a business and join the workforce.

Cela reflète une économie prospère et concurrentielle, une économie qui se situe à l'avant-plan de la liste des priorités pour de nouveaux investissements, une économie qui crée des produits et services à la fine pointe de la technologie recherchés et nécessaires partout dans le monde, et une économie qui incite des gens de partout sur la planète à venir s'installer en Ontario.

However, as much as we would like to, no government can deflect the challenges that market pressures create, and it's no secret that Ontario's manufacturing sector is facing tough times. The very foundation that created the prosperity we know today is struggling. That's why I'm here today to tell the people of Ontario that the McGuinty government is committed to continue building on Ontario's response and competitiveness strategy for manufacturers.

Manufacturing is extremely important to Ontario's economic prosperity. Our government knows that the sector faces challenges, and we know there are problems that have to be resolved. We have been active in helping keep this sector competitive, and we continue to act to ensure that manufacturers are able to grow and prosper.

The fundamentals are in place. We're making it easier for manufacturers to do business in Ontario by phasing out the capital tax by 2010. We are reducing business education taxes which, when fully implemented by 2014, will benefit more than 500,000 businesses. We're striking

a balance between competitive and sustainable tax regimes, and investments in education, health care and infrastructure, the fundamentals that keep our economy strong.

Manufacturers across the province told us that to stay competitive they needed more avenues to get their products to more consumers, and we acted: An historic \$30-billion ReNew Ontario infrastructure plan has helped Ontario manufacturers raise the flow of goods to key markets across Ontario and throughout North America, not to mention 10 new international marketing centres around the world.

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Our government is proactively engaging with the private sector, using the multiplier effect of strategic public investments to leverage industry expansion and job creation. We listened to the auto sector. They told us that we needed to increase investments to assembly plants, and we translated that into a half-billion-dollar fund that leveraged \$7 billion in investment.

I'm proud to say that our auto investments have boosted Ontario to the number one automotive producer in North America for three years running, and this at a time of major restructuring.

We looked at the whole of our manufacturing sector and introduced an advanced manufacturing investment strategy—again, a half-billion-dollar plan to increase competitiveness and productivity across the sector. Now we're positioning Ontario's economy for the next generation of jobs. Our government's \$1.15-billion next generation jobs fund will spur significant investment and create high-value jobs in high-potential areas of our economy, such as clean automotive, environmental technologies, biotech, ICT, digital media and more.

The Ontario government has more than a strategy for manufacturing in Ontario; we do have a vision. That's why I'm very pleased today to announce two gentlemen who have joined us in the galleries today: our co-chairs of the Ontario Manufacturing Council. Jayson Myers, president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, is here with us today, and we welcome Jayson Myers. We have done a tremendous amount of work with Canadian manufacturers, not just our trade missions to Alberta, but continuous work in terms of strengthening our manufacturing sector. Jim Stanford, our other co-chair, and economist with the Canadian Auto Workers, is here in the House. We thank him for joining us today. We have developed a tremendous relationship with this particular union, the largest private union in the nation. Thank you for being here today, Jim.

Led by these two chairs, the council will identify strategic approaches and recommend to our government how we can best support this sector. I'm very pleased that they've joined us here today. Their strategic leadership is a vital addition to our council and a big win for Ontario's manufacturing sector. I look forward to working with them both, and the council, to help manufacturers continue to create wealth and prosperity across Ontario's economy.

MANUFACTURING

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I rise in the House to add my support for the Ontario Manufacturing Council, announced here today by my colleague. I welcome the council as another component in our government's strategy to help Ontario's manufacturers. As Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, this is important to me because small and medium-sized manufacturers comprise 99.5% of all manufacturing establishments in Ontario. I look forward to working with the council, my colleague Minister Papatello and my other colleague, David Ramsay, to ensure that our small and medium-sized manufacturers succeed.

Since our government took office, we have taken comprehensive action to support Ontario's manufacturing sector. We implemented the auto strategy. We implemented the advanced manufacturing investment strategy. We have worked aggressively to maximize opportunities flowing from Alberta's oil sands. We brought forward the next generation jobs fund. We also focused on helping our manufacturers compete globally and find new opportunities and new markets. We are reducing taxes—phasing out the capital tax in 2010 and reducing business education tax rates, which, when fully implemented by 2014, will benefit more than 500,000 businesses.

Our government recognizes that Ontario manufacturers face challenges. But the key point is that our government is at the table, partnering with the sector to boost innovation, attract investment and create and protect jobs. Our government looks forward to continuing this productive partnership in the years ahead, and I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate the two chairs.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Frank Klees: On behalf of our caucus, I want to congratulate Ontario students for their excellent achievement on international tests. It's a tribute to them, and it's a tribute to their teachers and to their parents and, indeed, to the education system in this province.

We take nothing away when there are positive results. But what I want to do as well is express the pride we have, as a PC caucus, in having introduced standardized testing in this province so that we could indeed measure the success of our students and ensure that the appropriate resources are placed in those areas where students need that support. The Liberal Party, on every occasion, voted against the opportunity to implement standardized testing. Today, the government stands with us in taking great pride in that foundation that was laid so that we could, in fact, congratulate the excellence of our students in this province.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today is a day of great significance, as we acknowledge the importance of the

manufacturing sector and its workers. Historically, there has been no greater contributor to the prosperity of Ontario than the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector has long been the backbone of Ontario's economy. It is a sector that touches every corner of this great province. It provides meaningful employment to more than 940,000 Ontarians, putting food on the tables and roofs over the heads of themselves and their families.

Tragically, the manufacturing sector has fallen on difficult times in recent years. Since October 2003, Ontario has lost more than 175,000 manufacturing jobs—over 18% of this industry. These losses have been spread across subsectors of the manufacturing sector in communities across the province.

Last month alone, on November 1, Chrysler announced that it would be laying off 1,100 workers in Brampton; on November 21, the Lear plant in Windsor announced closure, leaving 160 workers unemployed; on November 16, Promens Canada in Lindsay laid off 80 workers; on November 15, Kraft Canada laid off 380 workers; and on and on it goes, with other plants that have announced closures in Brantford, Guelph, Cornwall and London. There are 2,419 manufacturing jobs gone out of Ontario in November alone, as this carnage continues.

This is part of a greater economic trend that is clouding Ontario's once-mighty economy. Where it was once the engine of Canada's economy, it has now been relegated to the unenviable position of the economic caboose. Just recently, reports show that Ontario ranks last in GDP growth, last in retail sales, seventh out of 10 in employment growth—jobs growth—and we're near the bottom in housing starts across Canada. This is the reality of Premier Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

This has been the reality for a couple of years, and yet what has been the reaction of the Premier? They announced just last week that they would appoint the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane and former Minister of Natural Resources to examine the problem. Apparently, it is no longer just a small contraction. Finally, it has grown into a real problem. It took four years for this government to recognize that they have a real problem in this area, and 175,000 families have paid the price for its not recognizing that problem earlier.

What have the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Small Business been doing for the past four years? Why haven't they been examining the problem and lobbying the Premier at the Cabinet table not to break his promise and eliminate the capital tax faster than 2014, and not to break his promise on raising electricity prices? Why have they not lobbied the Premier not to bait voters with a tempting holiday, which is akin to imposing a \$2-billion tax on Ontario's business sector in the form of a holiday in February? With the strength of Ontario's dollar, why haven't they reduced business taxes and reduced red tape so that manufacturers in Ontario can compete with other jurisdictions in the Great Lakes Basin?

We have seen no broad-based help for manufacturers in Ontario. When the member for Timiskaming—

Cochrane served as Minister of Natural Resources, we saw the forest industry shed 40,000 jobs under his tutelage, we saw 12 sawmills closed, we saw dozens of pulp mills closed. He has now been given the job of examining the manufacturing industry in general. Given the member's track record, I greatly fear for the future of the manufacturing sector here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind members on all sides of the House that certainly we encourage conversations, but we need to have respect for one another. If you have a serious conversation that you want to have, I'd ask that you take it outside the House and allow us to conduct House business here.

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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats would like to recognize and give credit to the teachers of Ontario for the results achieved in the international reading literacy study, which are due in large part to their efforts.

New Democrats have some concerns. Test scores have become the driving force of this government, as indeed in the previous Conservative government, so that they can advertise a politically useful number. We do not believe that standardized test scores should ever be the prime indicator of the success of the system.

Many of the teachers share our concern that in Ontario higher standardized test scores are being achieved at the expense of other skills and areas that are equally valuable. No one teacher has ever said to me, "I am really happy about the time and energy that we are putting into standardized testing." No teacher has said that they think that higher test scores alone are an indication of higher learning. Most teachers say that they feel pressure to produce a higher number, and so that's what they do. Many teachers are concerned about the time being spent on testing and the lack of time spent in other areas such as art and music, and this includes their concerns about spending more time on special education. Many are concerned with the limited nature of the test preparation agenda and the fact that it limits the educator's ability to explore subjects in depth.

Today, we believe that we should give credit to our teachers for these results. But even those who deserve the credit are telling us that there's a lot more to a successful education system than standardized test results.

WORLD AIDS DAY

JOURNÉE MONDIALE DU SIDA

M^{me} France Gélinas: New Democrats also want to recognize World AIDS Day. Mr. Smitherman has already mentioned the leadership of Mr. Stephen Lewis—a great social democrat and previous leader of the NDP, I might add—in fighting AIDS in Africa.

We in Ontario have to acknowledge the grim reality that since 1985, Ontario continues to have the highest

number of positive HIV test reports in Canada. In 2005 there were 1,670 positive HIV tests reported, a 20% increase since 2000. Of those people, 14% were women. HIV infection amongst women has been steadily increasing over the years, and they now account for 25% of the positive test results.

There are two points I want to make about what the government can do to improve the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS. First, change the northern health travel grants so that people with HIV/AIDS will qualify for the grants when they travel to access the services they need.

Le programme doit être assoupli afin que les critères d'éligibilité du programme de subvention accordé aux résidents du nord de l'Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales, afin que les gens du nord qui vivent avec le VIH / SIDA et qui doivent voyager pour avoir accès aux services dont ils ou elles ont besoin, soient remboursés pour leur déplacement.

Mon deuxième point parle de la pauvreté. Plusieurs des personnes atteintes du SIDA / VIH n'ont d'autres sources de revenu que le programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées. Le montant de la pension est tellement bas, que ces gens qui sont souvent très malades sont forcés de vivre dans la pauvreté. Ceci n'est pas acceptable.

My second point is that people who live with HIV depend on ODSP. ODSP has to be increased so that we can make a real difference in the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Paul Miller: Economic development: In the presentation by the minister, she said, "We have a vision." In Hamilton, your vision is clouded. We've seen little or no evidence of manufacturing or industrial jobs being created in our city. By the way, you might want to add a steel expert to your committee. He might have a lot of valuable input.

Low-paying service jobs do not fix the economic downturn in our communities. We have one of the highest residential and business taxes in Ontario. Until this government completely reverses social downloading, no business will be headed for Hamilton.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Minister of Small Business said in his statement, "We implemented the auto strategy." But clearly, with over 170,000 manufacturing jobs disappearing, many of them in the auto sector, that's not working.

He said that he implemented the advanced manufacturing investment strategy. Again, that's not working.

He said that he's worked aggressively to maximize opportunities flowing from Alberta's oil sands. I guess that's where all the jobs are going.

He brought forward the next generation jobs fund. Again, that's not working.

Finally, he talked about reducing the business education tax. I certainly know from our friends in TABIA that that is not working. In fact, it's not even going to come into place for another seven years.

So has this government done much for small business? No.

LEGISLATIVE LIBRARY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just like to remind members on all sides that in my opinion one of the most important places in this building is our legislative library. We thank the staff there for the great work that they do for all of us. I would just remind everyone that it is their annual holiday open house. That's from 3 to 6 p.m. today on the third floor in the north wing, featuring hidden treasures of the library. So I would encourage you to help support our legislative library.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Premier. There is an article in today's *Globe and Mail* indicating the government will experience a significant loss, possibly in excess of several hundred million dollars, as a result of investments that have gone into the dumpster. Will the Premier indicate if this is indeed the case and, if yes, what impact the loss will have on government finances?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are \$720 million in investments in the so-called commercial paper issue. At this point in time, we estimate that our losses will be under \$100 million and fully offset by net interest savings, and therefore will have no impact on the province's financial statement, no impact on cash flow.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The minister can obfuscate as much as he wants and try to muddy the waters, but a loss is a loss. You don't scoff at a loss of over \$100 million. That's the Liberal attitude. We're talking taxpayers' dollars here—we see the approach of this government and its members—quite possibly, as the minister suggested, hundreds of millions of dollars.

The Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.'s motto is "Know your limit and play within it." You seem to have ignored your own agency's advice and gone to the casino with taxpayers' money. Why would you allow the financing authority to roll the dice with taxpayers' dollars?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Financial institutions around the world are experiencing this situation. In fact, this is a substantial sum of money; we recognize that. It is less than 10% of our cash holdings. The amounts purchased were done within reasonable limits of prudence. The hundred-million figure is there because we're awaiting

the results of the Montreal accord. That is our best estimate.

I should point out that our potential writeoff as a result of this is far lower than many other private institutions relative to their cash holdings. I should point out, it is not uncommon for public authorities to have investments like this. I should point out further that Ontario's bonds continue to sell very well throughout the world, again re-emphasizing the confidence credit granters have in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm told if they went to the secondary market today they'd be looking at a loss in excess of \$200 million. This government's attitude toward the loss of this many hard-earned tax dollars is eerily similar to their nonchalance regarding manufacturing job losses: "Don't worry, be happy." We could have in brackets here "you dumb taxpayers." Liberal arrogance personified.

Government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the member to reconsider his comment that he made in regard to taxpayers in the province and to try and at least keep a good tone within this Legislature.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Government is in the stewardship business when it comes to tax dollars, not the investment business. You've exposed taxpayers and apparently aren't doing anything to prevent something similar from occurring in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Will you commit today to calling in the Auditor General, asking him to determine what happened, why it happened, who is responsible and how we ensure it doesn't happen again?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member opposite that this has global consequences affecting many public borrowing authorities and others. I would also remind the member opposite that in 1995 we bought these investments, in 1996 we bought these investments, in 1997 we bought these investments, in 1998 we bought these investments, in 1999 we bought these investments, in 2000 we bought these investments, in 2001 we bought these investments, in 2002 we bought these investments and in 2003 we bought these investments.

This writedown is unfortunate. The amounts invested were less than 10% of our cash holdings. Ontario's performance and rate of return exceeds that of other jurisdictions. International credit-granting organizations and people who buy our bonds continue to do so at record pace because of the financial—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Finance. As you know, August 13 became a day of infamy in financial markets when these risky investments were effectively frozen after investors became suddenly spooked by

the US sub-prime mortgage losses. That was almost four months ago. Why did four months pass before this minister or his predecessor came forward with a public statement to Ontario taxpayers of exactly what their loss has been by the McGuinty government's risky investments?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to remind the members that you were very supportive of your member when he asked his question. It was very quiet. The moment your member sat down, the noise started. There is room for banter within this House, but we need to keep it at an acceptable level, and I would ask the members to take that into consideration. Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would remind the member opposite that all of these investments are fully disclosed through public accounts routinely debated by this Legislature. In this particular case, Ontario's exposure is lower than most other comparable jurisdictions, representing less than 10% of our cash reserves. Cash reserves are routinely invested in order to earn a rate of return to further help us provide better health care, better education and to make investments in the environment. This is all documented in the public accounts, all documented through the OEFC and all readily available to all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Tim Hudak: If we could interpret the Minister of Finance's comments, what he's telling us is that he's effectively buried this issue since August 13, 2007. I guess in the meantime we had an election campaign, and certainly the Minister of Finance and the Premier, Dalton McGuinty, did not want the substantial loss to Ontario taxpayers to become public until after the election campaign. Will the Minister of Finance stand in his place today and apologize to the taxpayers of Ontario for keeping this buried for four months and for the substantial losses of these investments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, all these figures with respect to the amounts of investments are fully available to the member and to all members of the assembly. We routinely look at them—our members do. We're aware of what the OEFC is doing and what the government is doing. I'd urge him to look more carefully every year at these things.

Relative to other jurisdictions, we do not have as much exposure as others in terms of the percentage of our cash reserves. But those numbers are readily available. They are accessible to members and have been subject to tabling in the Legislature and subject to all the usual scrutiny that comes with this assembly. We'll know the final number once the terms of the Montreal accord are set. But I remind the member opposite, we anticipate no net impact on our financial statements resulting from this right now.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Minister of Finance asks us to look more carefully. Maybe the Minister of Finance and his predecessors should look more carefully before exposing Ontario taxpayers to risky mortgages in Austin, Texas or Atlanta, Georgia.

Minister, some \$200 million potentially lost to Ontario taxpayers—taxpayers, by the way, who are paying higher

taxes under the Dalton McGuinty government, taxpayers who are paying higher hydro rates under the Dalton McGuinty and have seen substantial sums invested in risky mortgage schemes in the United States.

Minister, I want to know, who made the judgment call to invest in these risky mortgages, what penalty is that individual going to pay, and will you finally call in the auditor to get the truth before the assembly today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Ontario has been investing in these papers for 15 years. By my reckoning, governments led by Bob Rae, Mike Harris, Ernie Eves and Dalton McGuinty have made these investments. Of course, Floyd Laughren was the finance minister at the time some of those investments were made.

This is not to diminish the fact that there is a write-down. Ontario has been hit, as other jurisdictions have. It's my view that the investments relative to cash reserves were relatively low compared to other jurisdictions. The loss we estimate to be under \$100 million. No one wants that, obviously. I don't think your government would have wanted that when you invested in these types of instruments. Unfortunately, like most other jurisdictions, we have been caught up in the situation. Again, we estimate the loss will be under \$100 million, which is not to say that we don't want to do better in the future.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: Yesterday, you waxed eloquent about meeting with the Premier of Quebec and talking about sustaining manufacturing jobs, so I want to ask about measures Quebec is taking. Does the Premier agree with Quebec's introduction of a \$120-million workforce investment tax credit that is winning kudos from labour leaders and manufacturing leaders in the province of Quebec, and if the Premier agrees, will he commit to introducing such a workforce investment tax credit here in Ontario in your economic statement next week?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the question. Quebec is bringing its own particular approach, and I can tell you that we've been bringing ours. I like to think that we have been leading here. We were the first jurisdiction in North America to come forward with a half-billion-dollar auto sector fund. We landed \$7 billion worth of new investment. We did that, and that was an Ontario approach. We also have in place an advanced manufacturing investment strategy—and by the way, these were in place long before Quebec announced its recent spate of initiatives. That half-billion-dollar fund has spawned, I think, some \$600 million worth of new investment and some 3,400 new or protected jobs. We've also brought a pretty aggressive approach to supporting agriculture and forestry.

I must say that in each and every instance, we have not had the support of the leader of the NDP or his party when it comes to working with labour and with the private sector to strengthen our manufacturing sector. I

would love to get that support as we work together on behalf of our manufacturing sector.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier boasts about an auto sector strategy when the analysts say Ontario, over the next five years, is going to be the biggest loser of auto sector jobs in all of North America.

But again, I want to ask the Premier about his conversations with the Premier of Quebec. Does the Premier agree with Quebec's approach of taking back wood allocation rights from forest companies that shut down mills and kill jobs, and if he does, will he commit to taking back wood allocation rights from forest sector companies that have shut down mills and killed jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Quebec has its particular approach. I think it more appropriate to their circumstances than ours here in Ontario. We have in place over \$1 billion in programs available to assist the forest sector over the next five years. We've already flowed \$275 million in assistance to the forest industry. That has led to \$390 million worth of new projects that are under way because of our programs, and we expect to be able to announce many more in the coming months.

Beyond that, we know that energy costs remain a real and pressing issue for the forestry sector. That's why we have in place our pulp and paper electricity transition program. This is not something that they have in the province of Quebec, but we are proud to say that we have it here. It's a \$140-million program to reduce electricity costs by 15% over three years.

So again, I praise Premier Charest for the approach he's bringing in Quebec, but we're bringing our own approach here in the province of Ontario.

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Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, Premier, you talk about \$1 billion. The fact is that industry has only taken up \$89 million because what you have advocated doesn't work for them. Since you announced a special rate for paper mills, paper mills have laid off in Kapuskasing, Thunder Bay and Dryden, and more layoffs are on the way.

Premier, you should know that mills and factories in Quebec have a hydro rate that is only one half the industrial rate here in Ontario. Since your conversation with Premier Charest last week, will you commit in your economic statement to introduce a reduced industrial hydro rate here in Ontario which matches the reduced industrial hydro rate in Quebec?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP would have us believe that there are no economic challenges being faced by our cousins in Quebec, but I can tell you that there are some real and pressing challenges there.

We talked about some of our programs here in contrast to their programs. One of the things I would gladly exchange is their hydroelectric capacity in Quebec for ours, because they have been blessed by Mother Nature in a way that is simply stupendous. The leader of the NDP knows well that hydroelectricity is so much less

expensive than that produced by so many other means. We are working as hard as we can to expand our hydroelectric capacity. We are increasing the capacity at Niagara Falls, for example. We are looking to more run-of-the-mill opportunities that we have shunned in the past because we think it's really important to pursue those for environmental as well as economic reasons. But we look forward to continuing to work with all of our sectors to strengthen our economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier. The Environmental Commissioner released his report today. Does the Premier agree with the Environmental Commissioner that Ontario should crack down on urban sprawl by boosting transit and reducing highway expansion? If he agrees, will the Premier cancel the Highway 404 expansion through the greenbelt and use the money saved to build light rapid transit that would improve transit service, ease road congestion and fight climate change, which position is the Premier's position?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I want to thank the Environmental Commissioner for his report. He always has something worthwhile to say, and we will consider his recommendations very closely.

We have, I like to think, laid down a pretty good foundation of progress when it comes to standing up for the environment, including our initiatives to put in place a growth plan for the greater Golden Horseshoe. Keep in mind that Ontario had no plan to deal with population growth in a sustainable way before this. We also have in place now our climate change plan. We have a 1.8-million-acre greenbelt. We have increased the use of ethanol; we mandated that it be found to the extent of 5% in our gasoline. We are pursuing an aggressive renewable energy plan; we've got the most aggressive plan in all of North America. We have an LCBO bottle return program now being made available at the Beer Store. We've got the toughest Clean Water Act and the toughest endangered species protection legislation in Canada. That's just a small listing of those initiatives that we've taken during our first four years, and there is much more to do.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Environmental Commissioner says that the urban densities that are happening in greenfield areas are such that they will not support rapid transit, which means more greenhouse gas, more highway congestion and more cars.

The Environmental Commissioner also has some grave concerns about the way in which the McGuinty government sponsors a \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme but then says that it doesn't have to undergo an environmental assessment. He urges that the government put your deeply flawed integrated power system plan through a full and thorough provincial environmental assessment so that the real environmental issues can be considered. Premier, will you follow the advice of the Environmental Commissioner on that front with respect to your \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the leader of the NDP up on the issue raised regarding our support for public transit. I think it's important that Ontarians recognize that we have invested \$4.9 billion in public transit, including over \$1.8 billion in GO Transit. We now have on the table as an initiative to be delivered on by the Greater Toronto Transit Authority a \$17.5-billion massive investment in public transit—the biggest of its kind ever.

The leader of the NDP has suddenly become a champion of public transit, but when we put forward a proposal to extend the subway, he said he was against that. He said he was not in favour of our investment in public transit. It's difficult to tell from one day to the next whether he's for public transit or against public transit. On this side of the House, we are always in favour of public transit.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The question was about the McGuinty government's \$40-billion nuclear mega scheme. I take it the McGuinty government is not going to follow the Environmental Commissioner's advice on that one either.

The Environmental Commissioner also raised another serious issue. It's about your government's failure to fulfill your constitutional obligation to consult with First Nations when making decisions that affect First Nation rights; specifically, when you award mining permits and mining exploration permits without adequately consulting First Nations. Now, he urges that you reform the Mining Act. He urges that you begin a process of real consultation with First Nations. Are you prepared to follow that recommendation of the Environmental Commissioner or will we see more Platinex court cases?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I take that particular advice from the Environmental Commissioner to heart. I think he's right, and we need to do more work. I'm proud of the fact that we set up the first aboriginal affairs ministry. We have a minister dedicated to that. We know we have to put in place some reasonable protocols that ensure that effective consultation is in fact there. We know we have to take a look at the Mining Act as well to ensure that it is updated and reflects the aspirations of a progressive society here in Ontario. That is one of many recommendations we will be carefully considering in government.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Today the Environmental Commissioner released another tough report on your government's record on the environment. In response to the report, your cabinet colleague Minister Caplan suggested to the Globe and Mail newspaper this about the Environmental Commissioner, and I quote: "Clearly, he's wrong." My question to the Minister of the Environment is this: Do you agree with what Minister Caplan said when he stated that the Environmental Commissioner is clearly wrong?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the member opposite for her question. As the Premier has already stated, we accept the report that the Environmental Commissioner has brought forward. We always look forward to the reports of any independent officers of this Legislature. We like their advice. We will obviously study the report in great detail. But we're encouraged by some of the very positive statements he made in the report about what this government has actually done over the last four years, when you're well aware of the fact that in the eight years prior to that, absolutely nothing was done with respect to many of the projects that have already been mentioned. I will go into greater detail during the supplementary question.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Minister, the Environmental Commissioner has stated that your government needs to step back and rethink your strategy in terms of putting infrastructure over environment with respect to urban growth. To date, your strategy is to step back and blame anyone within reach.

But let me quote again from the Globe and Mail and again from Minister Caplan, that "The federal government are the ones who decide what the immigration levels are," and Ontario is simply dealing with it.

To the Minister of the Environment: Do you agree with Minister Caplan that the failure of your government's growth plan and the environmental consequences of that failure are the fault of new Ontarians and the federal government?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As the member well knows, the projections are that in the province of Ontario we expect to get about three and a half to four million more people in this province over the next 25 years. In order to accommodate that, we put in some very aggressive plans.

First of all, we put into effect the greenbelt plan that's going to protect the size of PEI: 1.8 million acres of land. Secondly, we put together a growth plan to make sure that those people who are coming to this area will be accommodated.

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We also put into effect a water protection plan to make sure that the sources of water are protected, which, by the way, you did absolutely nothing about.

I might just remind you what the commissioner said in 2002, when you were in government. He stated the following: "The water quality monitoring system has largely been abandoned by your government. I suspect that the problem may be worse than ever." As a matter of fact, you have done absolutely nothing about supporting public transit.

We are very proud of our record of accomplishment over the last four years. There's a lot of work that's been done, there's a lot more work to do, and we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is to the Premier, and it's a very easy one. Will the Premier immediately

move to pick up 50% of transit operating costs to alleviate the financial crisis affecting Ontario's cities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that the member is—and she should be, as all members of the House are—concerned about consulting with municipalities, specifically the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, before embarking upon policies that would have significant ramifications for both the provincial government and those municipalities. You are aware at the present time that there are discussions going on and a full evaluation of the responsibilities that are held by the provincial government financially and those that are held by the municipal government. You are aware as well that the Ontario government has already uploaded some of the costs which municipalities have been forced to incur over the years to make room for municipalities to invest in areas which are clearly within their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Minister, what I think everyone in this province is painfully aware of, including city councillors and treasurers, is that in fact your government refuses to pay its bills. So will you commit today to paying Toronto and in fact all municipalities the money you owe them for the administration of Ontario Works, for the per diems, for the rates for emergency hostel services and for child care before they have to set their municipal budgets?

Hon. James J. Bradley: My colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is dying to answer this question.

Hon. Jim Watson: I am very proud of the track record of the McGuinty government when it comes to dealing with municipalities across Ontario. I happened to be the mayor of the city of Ottawa during the Harris-Eves downloading, and I know full well from personal experience the damage that did to the municipal sector. That is why I'm proud that in the last four years we have uploaded land ambulance costs to a 50-50 arrangement, we've uploaded public health costs, and on January 1, we're going to start the phase-in of the Ontario drug benefit plan and ODSP, which over a four-year period will save municipal taxpayers almost \$1 billion.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to congratulate you and all others who put forward their name for Speaker. It's noble work, and a special congratulations to you for being the chosen one.

My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mississauga is a strong and vibrant fast-growing community, and, like most municipalities, it needs work from senior levels of government. The McGuinty government's Move Ontario 2020 plan is a big step forward for Mississauga, providing \$65 million for Mississauga Transit as part of that plan.

As a new MPP, I want to bring back to my constituents information about what their provincial government is doing for them. Would the minister be able to elaborate on some of the other initiatives the government has undertaken to support the people of Mississauga and municipalities across Ontario?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me congratulate the honourable member from Mississauga South on his election—what a great addition to the Legislative Assembly—and for his first question.

The McGuinty government is very proud of the investments we have made in Mississauga: the Move Ontario 2020 plan that saw \$15.3 million in provincial gas tax go to that particular region, and \$11 million in 2005-06 helping to support public transit. This government is also back in the business of providing support to municipalities through affordable housing programs. The region of Peel is receiving \$39.6 million in support to help those people who need a break when it comes to affordable housing. In 2007, Mississauga received \$18 million in part of its land ambulance cost-sharing agreement. We're very proud of the investments of the McGuinty government in Peel region, in Mississauga. We look forward to working with Mayor Hazel McCallion in a respectful fashion.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Minister, for that information. It is clear that the government has a strong working relationship with the city of Mississauga.

I know that previous governments have butted heads with municipalities. They've treated them as second-tier governments. I know that there are some politicians who have shown little respect to our municipalities and have downloaded services, telling them to stop whining.

Minister, I don't want to start throwing insults. I want to work closely with other levels of government and to help Ontario and our municipalities prosper. Can you tell me in what other ways this government can work with Mississauga, other municipalities and other levels of government so that our municipalities can become even stronger?

Hon. Jim Watson: One of the very first meetings I had an opportunity to go to as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was by the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, chaired by Hazel McCallion. I was able to give an update on the fiscal review process that is going to report to us with a consensus report in the spring, and the committee of mayors from all across the province of Ontario unanimously endorsed a report by Hazel McCallion, called Cities Now, demanding that the federal government help the municipal sector all throughout the province of Ontario. They need help. They need help in transit, in housing, in infrastructure, and they endorse Mayor McCallion's Cities Now program and the One Cent Now program put forward by Mayor Miller and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

In my own hometown of Ottawa, 150 business, labour and civic leaders marched on Parliament Hill, demanding that the federal government help the municipal sector throughout the province. Our mayor, Larry O'Brien, said,

"We're calling on the federal government to take a leadership role and work with the province to ensure that the city is properly funded." What was the response from the federal finance minister to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment, please. I would just remind all members that when the Speaker rises, there is an expectation that they will take their seats, please.

Start the clock.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Minister, over the past few months, confrontations in Caledonia have resulted in people being knocked unconscious and sent to the hospital. As a result of this violence and as a representative for Caledonia, I have received countless phone calls and e-mails. People are asking me one specific question. They are asking, "Who's in charge? Who's in charge of the OPP?"

Minister, can you assure the people in my riding that you are accountable, that you are the one who sets the policy and you are the one who sets the direction for our OPP?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, congratulations on your appointment.

Certainly the role of the OPP is to ensure that the community and its residents are safe, and I have to tell you and the people of Ontario that I am very, very pleased with the way the OPP has acted throughout this entire incident. I believe that we should be very proud of the very excellent and professional nature of engagement with the community that has taken place over the course of the last little while.

1510

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, I'll go back to my question. Subsection 17[2] of the Ontario Police Services Act states that the OPP is subject to the Solicitor General's direction. That's you. Going back to my question, Minister, do you agree—perhaps you do not agree with the police act—that you have ministerial responsibility for setting direction for the OPP? Are you the one, or are you not the one? Are you the one my constituents can go to with respect to some of the concerns with the OPP with respect to democratic responsibility concerning OPP services in Caledonia? Are you the guy?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: If the member is suggesting that the solicitor general or any other minister or member should interfere with the operation of the OPP, he's wrong. He's dead wrong.

What I would suggest to this member, and to everyone in the province of Ontario, is that we understand, when tensions are high, that we do everything in our power to ensure that those tensions aren't escalated, that we have confidence in the Ontario Provincial Police and the very professional way they carry out their mandate.

MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Over the last five years, Hamilton has lost thousands of good-paying jobs in the manufacturing and industrial sectors. What is the Minister of Economic Development going to do to address the economic crisis facing our city?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm happy to congratulate this member for joining us here in this House. Congratulations to you for being here.

I do want to say that we have a long record of support to Hamilton, and it's very important that all of us understand how core the city of Hamilton and its success are to Ontario. It will remain a priority of this government, and I think that all the representatives who come from Hamilton will see the work we are doing today and that we have done.

For example, in our first term—I will be happy to follow up with an additional list on the next question, but let's just start with Stelco. It was this government, in fact, that stepped forward to protect the pensions of the Stelco employees—a \$150-million loan guarantee. That was last term, but just the other day you'll note that our Premier was in Hamilton at Dofasco with an AMIS project that actually allows Dofasco to innovate for the future and secure the jobs of Hamilton. We expect this member to support those kinds of initiatives.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to address the comment about Stelco. That \$150 million was a loan to the company, and all it really did was make it more attractive to sell. What happened was that the company was devalued and sold in 18 months for \$1 billion. The CEO of that company walked back to Virginia with \$68 million in his pocket. Shame.

Major companies like Westinghouse, Consumers Glass, American Can, Firestone and Procter and Gamble, the big steel producers, and many small manufacturers like Otis Elevator, Frost Fence and International Harvester are all gone. Thousands of jobs have left the city—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Question?

Mr. Paul Miller: What is going to replace them when the government has done nothing to address the issues that forced them out in the first place?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm not sure what the question is there, Minister.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: It's important to note that we are working with the city of Hamilton. We were with the mayor the other day, and he spoke very heartily about this Premier and our commitment to the city of Hamilton, and that is going to continue.

Let me say this: The fundamental infrastructure that Hamilton needs to thrive is the role that we can play, and have played, with the city of Hamilton. The \$11 million in public transit—the same party you now represent voted against that initiative. The \$3 million to clean up the brownfield areas in Hamilton for redevelopment and economic development—you're now part of the party that voted against that initiative. The list goes on, and it

will continue because our investments in Hamilton are important for the infrastructure that businesses need to thrive in Hamilton. Dofasco is but one recent example.

I appreciate your comments about Stelco, but the people in Hamilton want jobs, and that's what we help to deliver.

FAMILY DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on your new role.

Our government has created a new public holiday, Family Day, to be held on the third Monday in February. My constituents, like all Ontarians, work very hard and they deserve more time to spend with their families. Yesterday in the Legislature, the official opposition had something interesting to say about our government's initiative to reward Ontarians for all their hard work. Could you please indicate why our government went forward with the creation of Family Day?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Speaker, congratulations on your election as Chair.

To the member from Mississauga-Brampton South, congratulations to you on your election to this place. We know you're going to make a fine contribution here. We know you're going to do a fine job in your riding and, judging by your first question, you're already off to a great start.

You're absolutely right. Our government has just created a new public holiday called Family Day because our government believes in a healthy and balanced work life, and a home life, for our workers across this province.

Yesterday something strange happened. Because if I recall, during the election I remember John Tory—

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Just a moment, please. I just remind members that respect is a two-way street within this House. I reiterate that there is some room for some banter within the Legislature, but when it gets a little loud it's difficult to hear the response.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yesterday in this House, the official opposition seemed to make it quite clear that they no longer support this new holiday, Family Day. This comes in stark contrast to the position they held in the last election. During the last election, John Tory said, "The gap between New Year's Day and Easter is a long gap and I'm all for a family having a day to be together." What happened between the election and today?

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the members of the opposition—I say the same to government—there is some room, but heckling your own member is not the appropriate thing to do. And it is her first day, first question in the House.

You have the floor, member.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It would indeed seem that the official opposition has changed their tune. Maybe the

new leader of the Opposition could explain to the hard-working families in his riding why Conservatives do not support giving hard-working Ontarians a holiday to spend together. I do remember John Tory's support for the creation of Family Day, and I think his party supported the same position at the time of the election. It would be pretty cynical for anyone to object to the creation of another day for families to spend time together.

Minister, I don't think John Tory was all alone in his support for our government's initiative. Could you tell me who else supports the creation of Family Day?

Hon. Brad Duguid: While this flip-flop yesterday may have been a surprise to some of us, frankly I don't think it should have come as too much of a surprise. I ask you, when have the Tories ever supported working families across this province? When have the Tories ever cared about families across this province? I think we're back to the same old story, the same old Tories.

But this party, this government, respects families and that's why we're looking forward to, on the third Monday of every February, giving families a chance to come together, giving family a chance to celebrate what's important in life in Ontario, giving families a chance to enjoy the health that comes with spending time together. The workers of this family deserve that day. This party's proud of the fact that we're going to give it to them.

1520

COURT SECURITY

Mr. Bill Murdoch: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. First, I'd like to congratulate him on his job, and next I should ask him who's in charge, but I won't.

My question concerns court security costs. As you know, we have a new courthouse in Owen Sound, and right now the city of Owen Sound is bearing the total cost of court security at the facility, which is about \$554,000, even though only one third of the cases are heard. Your predecessor had a tough time addressing this contentious issue, but Owen Sound Mayor Ruth Lovell and myself have and will keep pushing for a fair solution on who pays for court security. Minister, can you please bring me up to date on how your government plans to address this inequity?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to congratulate the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for being re-elected and thank him for the question, because it is an important question.

Clearly, there are municipalities across Ontario that are struggling with court security costs and policing costs, and you know, they're optimistic, because finally we have a Premier in place who understands the importance of shared responsibility and, as a result, put together the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Service and Delivery Review that's going to report back. I look forward to the findings of that review panel.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: As you know, you're a new minister in that portfolio, and that's why I wanted and

hoped that you got brought up to date. As you mentioned, you had the same Premier for four years, and he couldn't get brought up to date, so I'm a little concerned at that answer, because he mentioned that he had a lot of faith in the Premier and it's tough to have faith in the Premier when he hasn't done anything for four years.

You're putting it all on this review that's going on, Minister, and I have concern that they may not address this issue. What I would like you to do today is give us your promise that if this is not addressed, you will meet with the consortium that has been looking at that, along with a lot of the other mayors, and sit down with them and come up with an adequate solution.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me explain that in the previous four years our Premier was busy uploading the costs your government downloaded on municipalities.

I don't know what report is going to come back, but I do know that the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review team will come back with a consensus report between the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Toronto and the province. I think that is very, very important. I believe that shows the goodwill that is a part of this government. Whenever it comes to issues affecting municipalities, we have talked with our municipalities.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Finance Minister. Yesterday, we learned that you have no concrete plan to fix the problems at the OSC; you simply lamented that we don't have a national regulator. Today, we hear that you have no real plan or reason to write down \$100 million and you simply lament that other people are losing money as well. My question is, what concrete plans does the Finance Minister have to make sure that taxpayers won't be whacked by similar bad provincial investments in the future?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I want to thank the member for his question. Since he raised the issue of the legislative committee's recommendations—I appreciate him raising that—I went back and had a look at all 14 major recommendations, and they are all implemented or partially implemented—every one of them.

I want to thank the members of the Legislature for their outstanding input with respect to that, because it is important that investors have confidence in their capital markets. It is important that we, as a government, with our oversight and regulatory responsibility, listen to the views of the members of this Legislative Assembly. Those recommendations were far-reaching, and I am pleased that most of them have been fully implemented as of yesterday.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yesterday the minister couldn't come up with anything your government could do to protect Ontario investors, and today, with respect, the minister can't come up with anything he can do to make sure the taxpayers won't be hit yet again by financial mismanagement. Ontario deserves better from its finance

minister. My question: How can Ontario taxpayers trust the finance minister to manage the province's finances when he can't even answer these basic questions?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This coming from a member of a government that ran a \$10-billion deficit; this coming from a party that saw a downgrading of Ontario's credit rating three times, a record; this coming from a member of a party that saw 1,300 jobs a month lost in Ontario; this coming from a party that saw a record increase in our debt.

We've eliminated the deficit. Ontario's debt-to-GDP ratio is down under this government. Confidence is restored in our public health care system, our public education system and in the government's ability to enforce its environmental laws. That's a record I'll put up against his every day of the week.

PATIENT SAFETY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your election.

My question is for the Minister of Health. On November 29, the Canadian Institute for Health Information released the results of a three-year-long look at hospital mortality rates across the country. The report compared a hospital's mortality rate to the average Canadian experience. It will provide hospitals with an important tool to improve patient safety.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information allows hospitals to opt out of the study, and Humber River Regional Hospital, which has a site in my riding of York South-Weston, is among those that have decided not to publicize their numbers.

Considering the government's approach to increased transparency in the public health care system, I would like to know how the minister intends to reassure my constituents that Humber River Regional Hospital is meeting the standard.

Hon. George Smitherman: Congratulations to the new member on her successful election in the riding where, I'm privileged to say, I was born.

Transparency is the new government, and patients are going to come to expect and to learn much more about the performance of their health care system. On the study that the honourable member mentions, CIHI, which collects the data, allows the hospitals the option of whether they will participate in its public release. My office has been in touch with Humber River Regional Hospital. In the interests of transparency, I'm pleased to tell the House that they'll be releasing their data within a week.

Members should know that by next year, our government will have passed a regulation that would require all hospitals to report this data, without exemption, to ensure this information continues to drive much-needed improvements in patient safety.

I thank the honourable member for her interest in this issue.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the minister for being so forthcoming with that answer. It is important for patients to have access to this information so they can be informed about what their hospital is doing to ensure that they get the best care possible. The patients who use Humber River Regional Hospital will be pleased to know that they can expect further moves toward transparency from their hospital and their government.

As a supplementary question, I am sure that my constituents would like to know from the minister what other initiatives our government have undertaken to strengthen patient safety in the province's hospitals. Would the minister be able to tell us how our government is making sure that the health care system is more transparent and accountable to patients?

Hon. George Smitherman: As I mentioned, we see transparency as something that is particularly powerful and beneficial to our patients, so here are some initiatives that we'll follow along the same line.

By March 31, as a result of the wait times strategy, we'll be requiring all participating hospitals to begin reporting infection rates in three areas: surgical site infections, central line infections and ventilator-associated pneumonia.

By the end of July 2008, we'll implement a regulation that will require hospitals to inform patients about errors that have occurred regarding their care—very transformational. We intend to extend those requirements to all hospitals, whether they're part of the wait times strategy or not, as long as they have a sufficient number of procedures that would make this practical. These are all initiatives that will enhance the patient's understanding of circumstance. Added transparency is added pressure on hospitals to perform, and this is in keeping with our values.

1530

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. In my riding of Dufferin-Caledon, the Orangeville Fire Department has seen the resignation of seven firefighters in one week. The firefighters resigned because they received letters indicating that they were violating the union's constitution by being employed full-time in one department and acting as a volunteer with another. As you are no doubt aware, this is not a new issue. The Honourable George Adams issued a report and recommendations on how to balance the use of double-hatter firefighters. Given that this issue impacts many smaller communities across Ontario that rely on volunteers, is your government prepared to implement the Adams report recommendations to ensure that smaller fire departments that rely on volunteers will be able to use and continue to use double-hatters?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, I want to congratulate the member on her election and I want to say that she represents a view in her constituency. I want to

also inform her that our government has not changed its position and we do not believe that legislation or interference in the collective bargaining process is the solution to this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: To the same minister: For the last five years, I've been raising this issue in the Legislature to express support for two-hatter firefighters. The minister now has two choices to protect the public interest: He must either make the fire service grant a permanent, ongoing program to support small and rural communities with their firefighter training needs or he must support legislation to protect two-hatter firefighters from these union threats. Which option will the minister choose?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Being sort of a master of introducing private members' bills, I would suggest that the member is simply doing his job in advocacy for his constituents and I encourage him to continue to do that. We're not deviating from our position with regard to this. We understand and we believe that firefighters, fire chiefs and municipalities must work together to resolve this issue. We are confident that co-operative dialogue amongst all of the partners will lead to a very, very positive solution.

PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: This past summer saw a tax on Asian-Canadian anglers here in Ontario. Last week, the Canadian Sportfishing Industry Association called for enforcement of anti-harassment laws under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. What are your plans, Premier, to ensure that this summer, all legal anglers, including Asian-Canadian anglers, are free from harassment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you for the question. Harassment or activity based on anybody's heritage or cultural heritage is just not accepted in our society. We have the Human Rights Commission to investigate such instances. Where they receive complaints, they are very proactive in asserting the sanctity of people's heritage and in protecting that. I'm pleased to say that in the instances where complaints have been forwarded to the Human Rights Commission concerning incidents or allegations involving the fishers in question they have taken action and they are proceeding with the appropriate level of investigation. They have also instituted a public education campaign in the appropriate jurisdictions to make sure that the public is aware and supports the fact that this should not occur.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, your minister didn't answer that question. What are your plans to ensure that in the coming year, all anglers—Asian-Canadian anglers included—can go fishing legally without fear of harassment? Can you please answer that question? What are your plans?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'll pass the supplementary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again, congratulations on your election as the Speaker.

The question is a good one in terms of what we're doing to move forward, and I thank the member for the question, because under no circumstances should there be any assault or alleged assault without it being followed through. So one of the most important things that we can do and are going to do is education, ensuring that the fishing regulations that come out are available to all, and we're looking at whether they should be in multiple languages. We're also going to encourage the conservation officers to continue with their enforcement and to follow through.

The Attorney General was correct that if in fact there is any violence, it goes through to the OPP. Of course, it can come through our tips line as well.

PETITIONS

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: This petition is titled "We Request Land Dispute Hearings" and is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas land dispute deliberations to date have operated under a veil of secrecy, without transparency, and have created an atmosphere of privacy and scepticism, shutting out people from information and decisions that impact them directly; and

"Whereas Ontario's aboriginal affairs minister has indicated, in both the media and during his visit to Caledonia, his intention to garner local public input; and

"Whereas our Ontario Legislative Assembly provides a mechanism for open, accountable, transparent recorded discussion through all-party committee hearings that are open to the media;

"We, the undersigned, petition our provincially elected legislators, representing all political parties, to commence public hearings through a select or standing committee, as soon as possible."

These petitions are signed by people from Canfield, Dunnville, Hagersville and, of course, Caledonia.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT RIGHTS

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the officer in charge of the maximum secure psychiatric facility at the Oak Ridge division of the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre, in Penetanguishene, Ontario (Oak Ridge), requires that virtually all staff members handle mail and refuses to create a job position for a mail person so as to resolve decades of ongoing and continuous problems with the pickup and delivery of mail; and

"Whereas the chief executive officer for Oak Ridge, Dr. Brian Jones, was investigated by the RCMP in March

1996 and found to have unlawfully opened and damaged patient mail while employed as a director at the Kingston Psychiatric Hospital; and

"Whereas the chief executive officer for Oak Ridge also refuses to create a job position for a mail person so as to resolve the decades of ongoing and continuous problems with the pickup and delivery of mail; and

"Whereas the psychiatric patient advocate office for the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre has been investigating the ongoing and continuous problems with the pickup and delivery of mail for more than 20 years but has never effected a resolve of any kind, thereby acting to condone, circumvent or undermine patient rights; and

"Whereas the ongoing and continual problems with the pickup and delivery of mail constitute the opening, examining, withholding, obstructing or delaying of communications, including communications with barristers and solicitors and members of Parliament, in violation of section 26 in the Mental Health Act, RSO 1990...;

"We, the undersigned, patients at Oak Ridge, hereby petition members of the Legislative Assembly to resolve this ongoing and continued problem with violations of section 26 in the Mental Health Act, RSO 1990, c. M.7, by enacting an amendment that would require the officer in charge of a psychiatric facility to appoint a person responsible for ensuring that communications by way of mail are not being opened, examined, or withheld, and that their delivery will not in any way be obstructed or delayed."

It is signed by about 100 people of that facility.

1540

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with that petition and I've signed it.

**ONTARIO NORTHLAND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
LABOUR DISPUTE**

M^{me} France Gélinas: From Ontario Northland service supporters:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of northern Ontario communities, have had no ONTC bus service since the strike began September 29; and

"We lack adequate medical services here and must travel for specialized medical care;

"Our family members attend schools or have jobs in other areas; and

"Train service only covers a few communities; and

"Winter will be upon us soon"—is upon us right now—"and our highways will be travelled by many of us who prefer the security of bus travel; and

"The people of the north must have public transportation; and

"The mandate of the ONTC is to provide this service;

"We, the undersigned"—and there are 1,961 signatures to this—"petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to settle this dispute with the striking drivers. We need our bus service returned."

I fully support this petition and I affix my signature to it.

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to present yet another petition about "Bringing Health Card Renewal Services Closer to Glanbrook Residents." It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signatures of Audrey and Trev Ormandy, I affix my signature in support.

PSYCHIATRIC PATIENT RIGHTS

Mr. Michael Prue: I have another petition from the same group of individuals on a slightly different topic. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the officer in charge of the maximum secure psychiatric facility at the Oak Ridge division of the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre in Penetanguishene, Ontario ('Oak Ridge'), has restricted patient access to telephone communications by:

"(a) removing Bell Canada pay telephones from each ward unnecessarily, which prevents privacy of telephone calls with solicitors, financial institutions and others by reason that the calls must now be made through an Oak Ridge telephone with a switchboard operator and computerized system capable of monitoring and recording conversations, gathering personal access codes and credit card numbers, and recording data on the telephone numbers called and the times, dates and durations of the calls; and

"(b) by eliminating separate telephones on each ward that were used for conference calls to solicitors, the courts, disciplinary bodies, the Human Rights Commission and other parties; and

"(c) forcing a physically handicapped patient to share a telephone that was previously designated for his particular disability with 19 other patients on a ward; and

"(d) limiting each ward to just one telephone for all 20 patients to share, despite that (1) provincial jails provide one telephone for every 10 inmates; (2) there are up to eight additional telephones available for the four to 12 staff on each ward; (3) the majority of patients at Oak Ridge are from Toronto or other regions and generally require long-distance communications; and (4) virtually all of the 160 patients at Oak Ridge require contact with solicitors by reason of the legal proceedings relating to their detentions; and

"Whereas the chief executive officer for Oak Ridge, Dr. Brian Jones, refuses to reinstate access to telephone communications and further refuses to allow access to by way of fax, e-mail and the Internet (i.e., other than limited Internet access to a handful of select patient enrolled in schooling), which are normally modes of communications that solicitors, financial institutions and others are commonly using more often than telephones and mail; and

"Whereas the psychiatric patient advocate office for the Penetanguishene Mental Health Centre has investigated complaints about restricted communication for years but has never attained a resolve of any kind, thereby acting to condone the restrictions and circumvent or undermine patient rights; and

"Whereas the patients at Oak Ridge are not convicted of criminal offences or detained there for punitive purposes and subsequently maintain their civil, legal and democratic rights; and

"Whereas the restricted access to communications by way of telephone, fax, e-mail and the Internet would effectively constitute the withholding, obstructing or delaying of communications in violation of section 26 in the Mental Health Act, RSO 1990, c. M.7;

"We, the undersigned patients at Oak Ridge, hereby petition members of the Legislative Assembly to resolve these effective violations of section 26 of the Mental

Health Act by enacting an amendment hereto that would define the reference to 'communication' therein as contact by mail, telephone, fax, e-mail and the Internet, similar to the definitions used in the Unclaimed Intangible Property Act, RSO 1990, c. U.1, s.1 and the Criminal Code, RSC 1985, c. C-46, s. 319-7. Alternatively, we petition members to enact any other amendment that would preserve such modern-day communications as a matter of right."

I would submit this.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

As I've said before, my mother taught at this school for about 34 years, and I went to this school from kindergarten to grade 8. It badly needs repairs, and I call upon the government to do so.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: I'd like to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's from a group from my riding called Seniors Deserve Dignity.

"Whereas in Ontario there is no minimum standard of daily nursing and personal care for seniors living in long-term-care homes;

"Whereas Ontario seniors in long-term care are given only \$5.57 per day for meals;

"Whereas our personal support workers, the front-line staff in long-term-care homes, are stretched to the limit trying to meet residents' basic needs;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals have broken their promise to increase overall per-resident funding by \$6,000, to bring in a minimum of care for seniors, to hire an ombudsman to make long-term care fairer and more transparent, and to hire 2,000 new long-term-care workers, including 600 nurses; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty rewarded himself with a \$40,000 pay raise;"

We, Seniors Deserve Dignity, "petition the Ontario government to immediately fulfill the McGuinty Liberal promise for seniors."

I fully support this petition and I affix my signature to it.

STRANDHERD-ARMSTRONG BRIDGE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; you look great in the chair.

This is a very important issue in the riding of Nepean-Carleton. It's with respect to the proposed Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

"Whereas the close-knit communities of Barrhaven, Riverside South and Manotick combined have a total population of well over 50,000 people; and

"Whereas the only link between Barrhaven and Riverside South across the Rideau River is a lengthy commute either across the congested Hunt Club bridge or through the village of Manotick, which cannot sustain the traffic; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has identified the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge as a viable alternative to the traffic congestion created at the Hunt Club bridge and on Bridge Street in Manotick; and

"Whereas the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is a much more environmentally sustainable option for south Ottawa commuters across the Rideau River than either the commute through Manotick or via the Hunt Club bridge; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has identified the cost of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, including all ramps, road widening and bridge work, at \$105 million; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has requested that a third of that funding, approximately \$35 million, be provided by the Ontario Liberal government, and further, that one-third from the federal government has already been committed; and

"Whereas the previous Liberal MPP for the community of Riverside South did not act on the need for this bridge and the current Liberal Premier of Ontario has refused to enter into negotiations with the city of Ottawa over sharing the cost of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge;

"The residents of Barrhaven, Riverside South and Manotick call on Dalton McGuinty to build the bridge now."

I couldn't agree with this petition any more than I do, and I affix my signature and present it to page Jordan.

1550

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yet another petition to bring a health card renewal clinic closer to Glanbrook residents. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signature of Josephine Streker, I affix my signature in support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 3, 2007, on the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm honoured to stand in the House today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and our party leader, John Tory, to respond to last week's speech from the throne.

At the outset, I think it's safe to say that responses to the speech from non-partisans indicate widespread disappointment. I'm going to put a handful of quotes on the record to emphasize the general reaction: a "tepid affair"; "syrupy platitudes"; "over-hyped." But perhaps the most consistent message of disappointment was the speech's failure to provide any specifics on how the government will cope with what is undoubtedly the most serious challenge facing our province: the hollowing out of the manufacturing sector.

Webster's dictionary defines "crisis" as a "situation that has reached a critical phase, with the distinct possibility of a highly undesirable outcome." I would

suggest that the situation in this province's manufacturing sector meets that definition.

In a press conference following the speech from the throne, CBC Radio's John McGrath asked Mr. McGuinty about the speech's failure to adequately address job losses in the manufacturing sector. The Premier fumbled, mumbled and stumbled through a non-answer, an approach that typifies a seeming nonchalance about the loss of over 154,000 jobs since 2005 and the impact those job losses have on communities, families and the future well-being of this province. It's a "don't worry, be happy" approach that is unnerving at best and should give all Ontarians pause. There appears to be a real lack of understanding or a failure to listen or both when it comes to the challenges in our manufacturing sector; the most recent example of that is the government's introduction of a new statutory holiday coming to a business near you, if there are any left, this February.

They call it, in their usual Orwellian fashion, Family Day. One of our members, Lisa MacLeod, is attempting to introduce a resolution to change the name of the holiday to Unnecessary Fiscal Burden Day to more accurately reflect what this day will mean to our economy.

No doubt this announcement has some appeal with hard-working Ontarians, but what about businesses already struggling with the higher dollar and tougher competition from developing countries? Were they consulted about the impact on their operations? No. Regrettably, this was a broadside to an already troubled business sector at a cost of \$2 billion, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Auto parts giant Linamar Corp. described the holiday as "the last thing we need in an already tough environment." With 7,500 employees in the province, the day off means that Linamar must make up 60,000 hours of productivity.

Just think about the judgment here, the lack of consultation. We are witnessing a hollowing out of our manufacturing sector, plant closure announcements or layoffs almost every week, and the Liberal government's first initiative following re-election is to blindside business, saddling them with another cost, another reason to leave this province or close their doors. And their first throne speech following re-election virtually ignores the challenge and the advice of the people who drive our economy—the job creators—and is silent on tax reduction, cutting red tape, fixing our energy supply and other measures to address the situation.

I don't want to get personal here, and I won't. Some people ascribe all kinds of negative motives to the Premier with respect to our economy lagging behind the rest of the country; I disagree. I think he had and has the best intentions. I also think Bob Rae had the best intentions for Ontario when he was Premier. Of course, he's now a Liberal, so I guess things come full circle over there. To pursue his best intentions, Mr. Rae raised taxes, raised welfare rates, created a slew of new social programs and turned Ontario, once the economic engine of Canada, into a province that nearly went bankrupt—

until Mike Harris and the Progressive Conservatives stepped in and turned Ontario around.

Today, we once again have a Premier whose best intentions for Ontario mean dramatically increased spending, raising taxes and increased regulation in lock-step with Big Brotherism. In the process, he's turning Ontario, once the economic engine of Canada, into the poverty capital of Canada—as the Winnipeg Free Press describes us, “an aging economic athlete,” an economy that lags behind the rest of the country. Four years from now, the Progressive Conservatives will do what we do best: step in and fix the mess left by the best-laid plans of well-intentioned tax-and-spenders.

The Progressive Conservative Party and our leader, John Tory, believe that without question the state of the province's economy, especially its manufacturing sector, is far and away the number one priority facing the government and this Legislature, and I can assure you it will be the official opposition's primary focus in the days and weeks ahead.

Speaker, as I'm sure you noted, the throne speech either ignored or gave short shrift to a significant number of provincial responsibilities—responsibilities that matter to Ontarians—like our justice system, agriculture, rural affairs, the inability of our conservation officers to protect natural resources and on and on. What the speech didn't spare ink on was a slavish devotion to the blame game. Mr. McGuinty has a propensity to blame others for his own government's failings and the speech fit nicely into the mould. Whining and blaming others was the centerpiece of the throne speech. If Liberal members don't believe it, I would ask them to read it again. Ten separate times it focused on the federal government.

1600

The McGuinty government has the blame game down to a science. When they can't or won't keep promises, they blame the ghosts of governments past. When that doesn't work, they blame the federal government—anyone but themselves. As our party leader, John Tory, suggested, Sir John A. Macdonald may be next on the Liberal's political hit list. Ontarians expect their government and its leader to take responsibility for their actions, to buckle down, work harder, get the job done and start keeping promises for a change.

I'm going to take some time to discuss just a few of the areas overlooked or ignored in the throne speech, matters that will continue to be priorities for the Progressive Conservative Party, the official opposition. One of these is integrity in government. I think it's eminently fair to say that the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, when elected, governs with personal integrity.

I stepped aside as Solicitor General when a young offender's identity was potentially revealed in the delivery of a throne speech. My colleague, Jim Wilson, stepped aside from cabinet while a matter was investigated in the Ministry of Health. We didn't wait until we were browbeaten into submission in question period, we just did the right thing. That's a proud trademark of the

Progressive Conservative Party when in office, along with keeping promises.

When you govern the province on the back of a paper napkin, or go where the wind blows to make policy, you are a government that lacks political integrity. But this government also lacks personal integrity because it rewards bad behaviour. The member for Mississauga centre, Mr. Takhar, is perhaps the best—or worst—example: the first MPP in Ontario's history to be reprimanded by the province's Integrity Commissioner for breaching the Members' Integrity Act. The last we saw him, he was drowning in scandal and running away from reporters into a waiting limousine. Today, where is he? Right back in cabinet courtesy of the Premier.

Another example is slushgate: money to the Premier's friends, no questions asked. And what happened to the man who operated the Liberal slush machine? Rewarded by the Premier with another leadership role, this time in the Legislature as chief government whip. These are just two examples that reflect the integrity vacuum with this government, reflect on the lack of leadership at the top, and it taints all of us as elected officials.

Another historic priority for the Progressive Conservative Party—justice, law and order—will continue to rank high on our list. Unfortunately, there is no shortage of concerns on the crime and justice front. Toronto is close to recording a record number of murders this year. Last year, seven out of 10 arrested on murder charges in Toronto were either on bail, on probation or under court-ordered prohibitions at the time of the crime.

Our judges continue to give two-, three- and even four-for-one credits to convicted felons for time served in a remand facility awaiting trial. Courts are clogged, with some judges allotting up to 13 remands—believe it or not, we heard this from the chiefs of police last week—before hearing a case, impacting court costs and policing costs and delaying justice to victims. Crime victims still have inadequate victim services and compensation. The shocking revelations last year from the Ombudsman are largely unresolved.

The illegal occupation of land in Caledonia, now approaching the second anniversary—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Wow. Two years.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Two years. The McGuinty Liberals have ignored the rule of law in Caledonia, leaving residents feeling abandoned and trapped.

I could spend the better part of an hour enumerating the problems in our justice system and the McGuinty government's continuing failure to come to grips with them, but instead I'm just going to briefly highlight a couple of the measures we will be continuing to press for to address those challenges.

The first will be the reintroduction of the private member's bill brought forward in the last session by our party leader, John Tory. It's designed to increase accountability in the justice system, requiring annual public reports on the activities of our courts. When this bill was voted on in the last session, Liberal members, including their

justice ministers, silently gave victims and other Ontarians the middle finger by voting against the bill. They also sent the clear message that the status quo in justice is acceptable to them and their party, and that we can keep the operations in our court system—our justice system—behind the curtains, away from Ontarians.

That's not good enough for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, and we will be consistently and frequently driving that message home. As well, the Progressive Conservative Party will continue to fight for the rule of law. All Ontarians are equally subject to our laws, without exception; no one is above the law or beneath its protection.

In wrapping up, Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to spend a few more minutes on our number one issue: the economy. As you know, talk of a US recession is in the air, fuelled most recently by a tightening in their bond market, and that should be ringing a few alarm bells within the McGuinty government. But if the throne speech and the Premier's words are any indication, it's not penetrating the cranium.

Last week, I met with the president of a Canadian subsidiary of a major multinational corporation. They operate a number of plants in various parts of Ontario. He told me that if they were building a plant today—making a plant location decision—they would never choose Ontario. This same company, whose president I sat down with, advised me that just a few weeks ago, prior to the federal government's economic statement, they were preparing to announce the closure of one of their Ontario plants. The federal tax cuts announced in that statement encouraged them to pull back and, at the very least, stay the execution. Their decision simply reaffirms the old adage: Tax cuts create jobs. Tax cuts also keep jobs. It has worked every time it's tried.

This Liberal government, regrettably, is taxing, spending and regulating this province into the ground. For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeds the national average. Just think about that. Our economic growth has fallen behind all other provinces and is now predicted to rank dead last this year by both RBC and CIBC. For 2008, Scotiabank predicts another 10th-place finish for Ontario. We now have the least competitive business tax structure in all of Canada, according to the C.D. Howe Institute. We're in danger of losing our status as a "have" province, according to Dale Orr of Global Insight Canada, who says Ontario's economy is "only a fraction of its former self."

This is not an accident. A moment ago, I reminded folks that tax cuts create jobs, that it works every time it's tried. Now let me remind you of the flip side: Tax hikes kill jobs, drive investment away and hurt Ontario families. It's called cause and effect. And it's not just tax hikes in the Premier's arsenal; he's blasting a hole in our prosperity with three barrels. The second barrel is regulation, and the third barrel is spending. Taxing, regulating and spending—it works, every time it's tried, at damaging our economy and hurting Ontario families.

A perfect example is diamonds. Ontario could have been a world centre for diamond mines. More importantly, it could have transformed northern Ontario into a jewel of the north.

1610

But here's where the Liberals' failure to understand even the basics of economics has damaged Ontario's future. It turns out that Ontario is literally sitting on top of a diamond mine—many diamond mines, to be exact. Now, to get those diamonds we need investors who will come here, risk their capital, build the infrastructure, do the work, create the high-paying jobs that will bring those diamonds up and, in the process, make Ontario a world centre for diamonds.

So if you want investors to come to Ontario, what do you do? The same thing you do with any guest you'd have to your home. You put out the welcome mat; you bring them inside and treat them well.

What did this Liberal government do? Well, they did put out the welcome mat, and when the first investor, De Beers, stepped onto it, the Liberals yanked it out from under them. They more than doubled the tax on the diamond industry. A De Beers executive said in this building that this is the kind of treatment they would expect in a Third World country. Now executives in the mining industry suggest that Ontario's first diamond mine may very well be its last. That's what Liberals do when they're sitting on top of a diamond mine: They find some way to screw it up.

To the husbands and wives of Ontario, I want you to look at your wedding rings. That could have been an Ontario diamond—a source of pride, a source of jobs, a source of revenue to pay for everything from education to health care to safe streets. Gone, thanks to Liberal taxes and Liberal, some would suggest, dishonesty.

Of course, Liberal tax hikes are fuelled by Liberal spending. In the past four years, total program spending—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I will withdraw that at your request, Mr. Speaker.

In the past four years, total program spending by the McGuinty government has skyrocketed by an average of 7.9% each year, and that's before all their new spending commitments: 7.9% each year. We have fixed election dates now so we know how long they'll be in office. So if you look at that spending, 7.9% per year times eight, that's a 63.2% increase in spending projected. It took 136 years, from Confederation until 2003, for the Ontario government expenditures to reach \$68 billion, but Dalton McGuinty single-handedly managed to increase spending to \$91 billion in 2007-08.

So what does this mean to Ontario families, the ones who are paying for all of this? Forty-five hundred dollars each year for each family. To some people, that's a car or an education or a honeymoon or an operation across the border, because Liberals have failed to shorten wait

times. Forty-five hundred dollars each year for each Ontario family: That's how much more this government is spending. Tax, regulation and spending works every time it's tried at damaging our economy, driving away jobs and investment and hurting Ontario families.

We in Ontario need a strategy, not just for next year but for the next decade. We need to plan how to ensure that we reach our goal of making Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family. That's why the government should convene a conference of leaders from business, labour, agriculture and our universities to help develop such a strategy. Then it will be up to our government to implement.

We've done it before when Confederation was in crisis. Progressive Conservative Premier John Robarts convened the Confederation of Tomorrow conference. We can do it again, but only if the government of Ontario rises to the challenge of defining Ontario's place in a changing world.

In closing, I want to assure the people watching, the people listening, the people who care about parliamentary democracy and the future of our wonderful province that they have an official opposition in this Legislature ready, willing and able to do an outstanding job on their behalf. We have an enthusiastic and energetic crew with a solid mix of members experienced in both government and opposition. We're also bolstered with the addition of four new, very talented MPPs. I'm going to mention their names: Peter Shurman, Thornhill; Randy Hillier, Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington; Sylvia Jones, Dufferin-Caledon; and Bob Bailey, Sarnia-Lambton. They're raring to go and they'll keep this Liberal government on its toes.

As much as we'd like to be overly generous as we approach the Christmas and holiday season, we have a responsibility to convey our concerns about the state of the province, its communities and its people. What that means, in case anyone is uncertain, is that we will not support this throne speech.

The official opposition will be voting against it, and at this point I would like to move an amendment to the throne speech.

I move that the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by adding after "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session" the following:

"However, the current speech from the throne fails to adequately address the state of our economy which is the single most important issue facing Ontario today; and

"Whereas since the beginning of 2005, Ontario has lost more than 153,000 manufacturing jobs; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to recognize that economic growth predictions for the province have shrunk by a full percentage point from predictions used by the government less than a year ago; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to indicate any sense of urgency for dealing with the economic challenges facing Ontario; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to provide a plan for dealing with this new economic reality by maintaining a program of unreasonable taxation and undisciplined spending; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to set out a plan to reduce taxes and reduce regulations that are killing business in Ontario and placing such hardships on Ontario's families;

"We therefore regret to inform His Honour that the current Liberal government is ignoring the very real economic problems facing Ontario and has failed to ensure our economic fundamentals are sound and, in so failing, is failing to live up to the responsibilities placed on it by the people of Ontario."

I would so move, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Runciman has moved that the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be amended by adding after "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session" the following:

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"Whereas the throne speech fails to recognize that economic growth predictions for the province have shrunk by a full percentage point from predictions used by the government less than a year ago; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to indicate any sense of urgency for dealing with the economic challenges facing Ontario; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to provide a plan for dealing with this new economic reality by maintaining a program of unreasonable taxation and undisciplined spending; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to set out a plan to reduce taxes and reduce regulations that are killing business in Ontario and placing such hardships on Ontario's families;

"We therefore regret to inform His Honour that the current Liberal government is ignoring the very real economic problems facing Ontario and has failed to ensure our economic fundamentals are sound and, in so failing, is failing to live up to the responsibilities placed on it by the people of Ontario."

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1620.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / procureur general
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay-Superior North / Thunder Bay-Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges-Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin-Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga-Brampton South / Mississauga-Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener–Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa–Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziatti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Hon. / L'hon. Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor–Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke–Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York–Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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No. 5

N° 5

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First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

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Wednesday 5 December 2007

Mercredi 5 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHICKEN INDUSTRY

Mr. Toby Barrett: The chicken farmers of Ontario are with us here today to share some prime poultry and inform us on some issues. They're having a reception tonight at 5 o'clock. Come on out, have some wings and learn a bit about our farmers and what they produce.

The broiler growers have long ensured both the safety and the quality of our local chicken industry, while also negotiating prices to be paid to all Ontario chicken farmers by all Ontario processors. For Ontario's 1,100 broiler producers, trade issues have not gone, and will not go, away. Canada needs to be able to negotiate a reasonable, sensitive product category at the WTO, one which will give us enough room to include all supply-managed products while maintaining current over-quota tariffs and preventing any increase in quota access.

Interprovincial marketing of chicken is also creating challenges. Broiler production remains an ever-changing industry, one in which the growing retail monopolies pose increasing marketing challenges.

As MPPs, we must all continue the job of helping others to understand the economic benefits of supply management. I say thus: We used to raise broilers before supply management and we paid the price. The three-legged stool of supply management sustains farm country: effective import controls, production controls and the ability to set the price.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Today, I want to speak about a project set to transform my riding of Hamilton Mountain, a project that is the result of the government's commitment to health care and to the people of Hamilton. Right now, the Henderson hospital is about to begin phase one of its redevelopment plan that will see the face of health care change, not only in Hamilton, but throughout the Golden Horseshoe and across the province.

The Henderson began as the Mount Hamilton Hospital in 1917 and served the veterans of the First World War. In 1954, the Henderson opened as a 322-bed hospital serving chronic and convalescent patients.

Over the next four years, nearly three quarters of the existing hospital will be redeveloped into a state-of-the-art facility. Construction will upgrade and expand inpatient and outpatient services to provide acute care support for the Juravinski Cancer Centre, the joint replacement program and general hospital services. In doing so, we will offer better service, more beds and a shorter waiting time.

Our government is committed to health care and to infrastructure investment. This project is only one in a list of many that demonstrates the government's commitment to modernize and expand health care infrastructure and improve access to quality health care. I am proud to be part of a government who has made health care one of its top priorities.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations to you on your recent election.

Today is International Volunteer Day, and each year it is recognized by the United Nations as a day on which volunteers around the world are celebrated. We set aside December 5 to recognize and show appreciation for the millions of people who donate their time, energy and talents to their communities.

I am constantly amazed by the willingness of people to work on behalf of others without the expectation of pay or other tangible gain. Every year, millions of Canadian volunteers contribute one billion hours to provide society with \$13 billion worth of unpaid community service through programs like Girl Guides, Meals on Wheels, Lions clubs and much more.

The contributions of Canadian volunteers open the doors to a better world for all, socially and economically. More and more Canadians are rolling up their sleeves and getting to work to promote a cause they believe in, help a neighbour in need or support the efforts of local youth groups.

Right now I'd like to recognize Timmy Shin and his mother, Minja Shin, who are in the gallery with us. Timmy speaks English, French and Korean. He's 13 years old and has applied for the page program next season—you want to talk about volunteerism at an early age.

To Timmy and to the volunteers in Thornhill and across Ontario, let me say thank you for helping to make Ontario a better place in which to work, live and raise a family.

RIDING OF PICKERING— SCARBOROUGH EAST

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: This is the first opportunity I've had to be on the record since we came back. I want to extend to you congratulations on your election, Speaker. I'm sure you will live up to everything that you might anticipate, and then some.

It really is a pleasure to rise today and share with my colleagues a little bit about my new riding, in effect, of Pickering-Scarborough East. One third of these constituents are new to me—new faces, new individuals—and I look forward to the opportunity to serve them during the next four years.

It's the only riding that bridges Toronto and one of the 905 municipalities, in Scarborough East and in Pickering. But there are common interests shared by both these communities. Certainly the Rouge Valley Health System is but one of these, where increased funding during the past four years has driven down the wait times, where there's the development of a new birthing centre at the Centenary site and the start of redevelopment at the Ajax and Pickering site.

The riding also incorporates the fabulous Rouge Park, extending in this part of the riding from Sheppard Avenue down to Lake Ontario and is part of a linkage to the greenbelt, which we worked so hard to put in place.

The communities in the riding share similar concerns for safety in their communities, for seniors and for children.

But in particular I want to thank the constituents of the riding for the way I was received and my volunteers were received, both at the door and on the phones throughout the campaign. It really was a pleasure having a chance to meet new constituents and reconnect with those we may not have talked to recently. I want to thank the volunteers who worked so tirelessly throughout the campaign to ensure that we had electoral success.

TERASA HILL

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise today to bring to the attention of this House the success of one of my constituents, Terasa Hill, cancer survivor and inventor of Barnies Horse Treats.

Terasa was featured on the CBC reality TV show, *Dragons' Den*, where she convinced the panel of financial experts that her idea is worth their investment of \$300,000.

Terasa demonstrates her courage while battling cancer, and at the same time her entrepreneurial spirit, like so many other Durham constituents Terasa purchased an injured racehorse named Sierra as a riding horse and family pet. In nursing the retired racehorse back to health, Terasa developed a nutritious snack of molasses and grain that she named Barnies Horse Treats. The horse treat proved to be so successful that it is distributed in 144 stores across Canada and earned Terasa a place on *Dragons' Den*.

I'd like to pay tribute to Terasa, the creator of Barnies treats, for her success. We all wish her well in all she does in life. Congratulations. Along with Terasa Hill, I commend all the hard-working entrepreneurs of my riding who slay dragons every day, despite the McGuinty government's "Don't worry, be happy" attitude.

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AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M. Gilles Bisson: Je veux relancer la demande à cette Assemblée aujourd'hui pour la création d'un ministère des Affaires francophones. Comme on le sait, les francophones en Ontario jouent un rôle important, non seulement dans la culture de la province, mais aussi dans l'économie et l'épanouissement de nos communautés. Ça fait longtemps que les francophones cherchent une place où ils peuvent amener leurs demandes quand ça vient aux projets qui vont non seulement soutenir leurs communautés, mais aussi augmenter leur présence et augmenter l'habilité des francophones de se trouver dans la communauté ontarienne d'une manière plus importante.

Pendant les années passées, ce qu'on a vu, c'est qu'on a retiré les fonds nécessaires pour soutenir la communauté francophone jusqu'à un certain point. On s'est trouvé à essayer de préserver nos services. On a travaillé très fort pour leur préservation. C'est le temps qu'on commence à les promouvoir. On a besoin d'un ministère des Affaires francophones qui sera là pour coordonner tous les efforts de la part du gouvernement provincial envers l'épanouissement des services pour la communauté francophone. Dans une communauté, soit Welland, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Hearst ou n'importe quelle autre, qu'on puisse aller à une place où le financement est en place pour faire la coordination des services entre les différents ministères. C'est important non seulement pour la province de l'Ontario, mais c'est même plus important pour l'épanouissement de notre communauté.

MAXWELL CLARKE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm honoured to be able to speak to this House today about the late Brigadier-General Maxwell Clarke, a great Canadian and outstanding Peterborough resident.

General Clarke was born on September 3, 1912, in Peterborough. At the age of 15, General Clarke joined the militia in the Peterborough Rangers as a private soldier. With the advent of the Second World War, General Clarke mobilized for war service with the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders. With this division, he headed off to England. From there, he held various staff appointments until going to Italy in 1943 with the Fifth Canadian Armoured Division. He finished the war at headquarters, the First Canadian Army, in Holland at Apeldoorn.

After the war, he commanded the 50th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery and commanded the 13th Militia group, the largest peacetime

grouping of reserve soldiers in Canadian history. He was an aide to two Governors General: Vanier and Michener. General Clarke continued his involvement with the armed forces as a member of the Regimental Senate of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment until his recent death.

Locally, Maxwell Clarke was involved with the United Way, as well as being president of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association of Peterborough. In 1928, he found employment with Quaker Oats in the mail room and retired in 1977 as vice-resident and operations manager for Canada. General Clarke is survived by his wife, Madeline, his three children, Arthur, Maxine and Henry, and seven grandchildren. Maxwell Clarke: a great Canadian who was proud to call Peterborough his home.

GREENHOUSE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Mr. Speaker, I want to as well congratulate you on your two elections—the general election and that of Speaker—and to advise you and all the members present that the Ontario Greenhouse Alliance is joining us today in the members' gallery. The Ontario greenhouse industry has a present investment of over \$2 billion in structures, not including warehousing, packing houses and associated business. At the current rate of expansion, the industry is targeting a further investment in rural Ontario, some \$20 million per annum.

In the spring and summer of 2001, the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers, Flowers Canada (Ontario) and Ontario Pepper Growers, with the support of Agri-Food and Agriculture Canada, commissioned the Ontario greenhouse industry to issue a resolution study. The result of this has been TOGA and its invention and work within the greenhouse industry in Ontario.

What they're here for today, more particularly, is to bring to us a little Christmas cheer, in the form of some beautiful poinsettias. So I encourage all members to pick up their little ticket for their poinsettias, to join TOGA in the legislative dining room and start the Christmas season in a beautiful way with their help.

CHICKEN INDUSTRY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Thank you, Speaker. I also want to add my congratulations on your election.

Today is Chicken Day at Queen's Park. Farmers started early this morning, meeting with MPPs and putting a face on the producers who generate \$491.5 million of annual economic activity here in Ontario.

My husband and I are among the 1,100 chicken farmers in Ontario who produce more than 321 million kilos of chicken meat every year. That represents almost one third of the total amount of chicken produced in Canada. This Ontario-grown chicken is distributed for home consumption, fast food establishments, restaurants, hotels and, yes, here in our own dining room. Chicken farmers are a part of the supply management system of marketing, which enables them to receive a fair price from the marketplace.

The Chicken Farmers of Ontario have made a Queen's Park tradition of their beer-and-wings reception, which takes place here in committee room 2 at 5 o'clock tonight. But as the member for Essex has stated, I also encourage you to go and meet with the greenhouse growers, who have turned the production of vegetables and flowers into a year-round opportunity for consumers to buy Ontario, buy local. Then head on down for the chicken farmers' beer-and-wings reception. All in all, it's a great opportunity to meet with some of Ontario's hardest-working farmers and come away with some of the good things that grow in Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr. Michael Prue: This is not a point of order, by the way, just for the edification of those others who stand up on a point of order. I merely wish to indicate to the House that the Musing family are here. They are here to see their daughter Marisa, who is one of the pages, and I would like to introduce them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, and welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to ask members to join me in welcoming my constituents Lori and James Hearsum, who are in the west members' gallery. They are from Newmarket, and we've had a good opportunity to share with them how we do business here. They're looking forward to how well-behaved the members of the government are going to be during question period today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park. I trust the honourable member means the opposition side as well.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I would also like to take an opportunity to introduce Donna Dillman and Marilyn Crawford, who are here today on the issue of uranium mining in eastern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Welcome.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Ms. Wynne moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to defer my statement to ministerial statements.

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MOTOR VEHICLE ORIGIN AND COMPONENTS DISCLOSURE ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE RENSEIGNEMENTS CONCERNANT L'ORIGINE ET LES PIÈCES DE VÉHICULES AUTOMOBILES

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 9, An Act to require the disclosure of the country of origin and the components of motor vehicles sold in Ontario / Projet de loi 9, Loi exigeant la divulgation du pays d'origine et de la liste des pièces des véhicules automobiles vendus en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The auto sector in Ontario and across Canada is being significantly impacted. What this will do is those individuals wishing to purchase a vehicle will know exactly where the components or where the majority of the manufacture of that specific vehicle is made so that when they are making a decision on which country or workers they want to support, that decision is made at the point of purchase.

LORI DUPONT ACT (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION), 2007

LOI LORI DUPONT DE 2007 SUR LA PROTECTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act, in memory of Lori Dupont, to better protect victims of domestic violence / Projet de loi 10, Loi, à la mémoire de Lori Dupont, visant à mieux protéger les victimes de violence familiale.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: Over the last few years, I have been very disappointed that the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 2001, Bill 117, has not been

proclaimed. This act will encourage the government to move forward with that, but it will also allow the justice of the peace to initiate domestic violence intervention orders obtained through the family court if a JP is convinced by the rules of evidence that such action should take place. It provides 24/7 access to justice by the respondent as well.

Thanks to those who have worked on it from the Dupont family; detective Cathy Bawden and Jacki McKinnon, who have worked on the DRIVEN project in Durham; and Paul Hong, a young volunteer lawyer who reviewed the Domestic Violence Prevention Act and made amendments, along with Vanessa Yolles, legislative counsel.

MOTIONS

APPOINTMENT OF HOUSE OFFICERS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice regarding presiding officers of the assembly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that Bruce Crozier, member for the electoral district of Essex, be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of the committee of the whole House; Ted Arnott, member for the electoral district of Wellington-Halton Hills, be appointed First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House; Jim Wilson, member for the electoral district of Simcoe-Grey, be appointed Second Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House; and that notwithstanding any standing order, Andrea Horwath, member for the electoral district of Hamilton Centre, be appointed Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House and that she be entitled to exercise the powers and duties of office as set out in standing order 4(c).

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to welcome my new colleagues who will be assisting me in the chair and look forward to working with you. We will get together very soon to set up a schedule that I know will work out for all of us. Congratulations to all.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTHY SCHOOLS ÉCOLES SAINES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This government takes the health of our students very seriously. Within our schools we want to encourage the healthier foods and beverages

and more active lifestyles that students need to be successful.

Cela inclut, faire en sorte que les cafétérias scolaires offrent des produits plus sains.

That's why I am pleased to rise in the House today to introduce the proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, that would, if passed, drop trans fats from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias.

Getting rid of trans fats in our schools and providing students with healthier foods can help reduce rates of child obesity and help improve students' readiness to learn. In fact, the Trans Fat Task Force, reporting to the Federal Minister of Health in June 2006, wrote that studies show that trans fat increases blood levels of LDL, or the bad cholesterol, and decreases blood levels of HDL, the good cholesterol, effects which are associated with increased coronary heart disease.

In 2004, the Canadian Community Health Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, found that 28% of Ontarians aged two to 17 were either overweight or obese. This is unacceptable. We know that kids with unhealthy weights are more likely to develop diseases like type 2 diabetes.

If the bill is passed, dairy products or meat products like beef or lamb that contain small amounts of trans fats would be exempted. Those are the naturally occurring trans fats. Special-event days such as pizza day would also be exempted. But we are encouraging schools to select healthier options for those special days.

The legislation would also remove unhealthy foods and beverages from all school vending machines. This builds upon the very successful voluntary ban on junk food in elementary schools that we introduced in 2004. We will also begin to establish comprehensive nutrition standards for school cafeterias, vending machines, tuck shops and canteens and other daily school food services.

Les jeunes passent une bonne partie de leur temps à l'école. Il est important d'offrir ces options santé afin de les encourager à acquérir des habitudes saines.

Yesterday I was at Bayview Middle School, a school in Toronto that, along with other schools in the board and other schools around the province, has already begun reducing trans fats from the food sold in its cafeteria. I want to applaud them for those efforts.

I am proud to tell you that if this proposed legislation passes, Ontario would be among the first provinces in Canada to drop trans fats in school cafeterias. I am pleased that we're acting so quickly on the two commitments we made to drop trans fats in school cafeterias and to prescribe a healthier menu in schools.

La loi proposée renforcerait notre stratégie générale pour des écoles plus saines, qui comprend le Healthy Schools recognition program, 20 minutes of daily physical activity in elementary schools and the northern fruit and vegetable pilot program.

We know that encouraging students to make these healthy choices now will help them reach their full potential and develop important healthy habits into adulthood.

I want to just acknowledge three people who have joined us today to support this initiative: Mr. Rocco Rossi, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario; Sharon Brodovsky, senior manager of Healthy Weights Initiative; and Krista Orendorff, the government relations coordinator.

VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Michael Chan: Today, December 5, is International Volunteer Day. The United Nations General Assembly created this special day in 1985. The goal is to highlight volunteer contributions and to encourage volunteerism.

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Five million people in Ontario volunteer their time in 45,000 organizations. That's a great reflection of the commitment of Ontarians to their communities and their neighbours. Ontario is fortunate to have this high level of civic engagement. We cannot, however, rely on luck. We need to recognize the contributions of our volunteers and find ways to include newcomers to Ontario in voluntary action.

At the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, we recognize Ontario's volunteers through a number of programs. This includes the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards for Voluntarism. Last year, more than 8,000 Ontarians were recognized through the Volunteer Service Awards. They wear their trillium pins proudly. I know many of my colleagues in this House took part in the 45 ceremonies that were held across the province, and I encourage you to do so again next year.

I am truly glad to say that the volunteer spirit prospers among Ontario youth. Young people account for 18% of all volunteering hours in our province. Young people in Ontario, 15 to 24 years of age, volunteer at the rate of 63%. That is 8% higher than the national average among citizens of all ages. At 63%, Ontario's rate of volunteering among 15- to 24-year-olds is the highest in Canada. They bring fresh ideas and energy to the organizations they serve.

Our government is now looking at ways to help volunteer organizations tap into newcomer skills and experience. Each year, about 130,000 immigrants arrive in this province. When they volunteer, they help organizations reach out to a greater range of people. And volunteering helps newcomers adapt to life in Ontario. This is a win-win situation.

We are also working with the voluntary sector to better deliver services to their communities.

I ask my fellow members to join me in saluting Ontario's volunteers on International Volunteer Day. They generously give of their self and time. They are part of a rich tradition in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Frank Klees: On behalf of the PC caucus, I want to express our support for the minister's announcement

today. We and all Ontarians support opportunities for students to live more healthy lifestyles, for more healthy exercise and nutritious food in our schools to fight rising obesity rates and the health problems that are associated with them.

Type 2 diabetes, once virtually unrecognized in adolescents, now accounts for half of all new diagnoses of diabetes in a number of populations. This has been almost entirely attributed to pediatric obesity. Some 85% of affected children diagnosed with diabetes are overweight at diagnosis. A rise in obesity and decrease in physical activity in young people contribute to insulin resistance and are significant risk factors in the development of diabetes.

According to data collected in 2000, 25% of boys and 14% of girls between the ages of 12 and 18 in Ontario were above a healthy weight. Schools can, and in fact should, provide an environment that encourages healthy eating and also regular physical activity, while assisting students to develop the knowledge and the skills to make their own healthy lifestyle choices.

According to recent data released this year by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, the issue of physical activity in Canada is a larger public health concern than ever previously believed. Ninety-one per cent of Ontario's children are not meeting the guidelines recommended by Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth, which state that children should be accumulating 90 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity, in addition to their incidental activities required for daily living.

We are making some progress in this province, but I would suggest that today's announcement, while good and while we support it, should be coupled by this government with the necessary resources and funding to ensure that not only do we have a legislative pronouncement to remove certain foods, but that there are also the resources within our schools to provide the necessary guidance to those teachers in terms of being able to deliver the information that's necessary for students to have, that there is in fact the necessary resource within the school system to provide the necessary physical activity that is required. We have far too many schools in this province that still do not have the appropriate facilities, whether they be gymnasium facilities or otherwise. Many are in disrepair.

We would call on the minister to couple her announcement today with a further follow-up announcement to schools across the province to ensure, on the one hand, that teachers are appropriately resourced, that schools have the appropriate funding to ensure that these programs are implemented and to ensure as well that the physical structures of our schools are such that they can accommodate the appropriate type of physical activity that is necessary.

Once again on behalf of the PC caucus, I commend the minister for bringing this forward. We look forward to the discussion around this and the education that will take place, not only for students but also for their parents,

so that all of us recognize the importance of healthy living and healthy choices in our day-to-day lives.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to respond to the comments of the minister with regard to volunteers. There's no question that volunteers do valuable work in our society. They contribute greatly. We honour them and we in fact are indebted to them. But there's a dark side to the reality of volunteerism in this province, and that is that too often services which are valuable to this society have been cut by governments, the federal and provincial levels—and even the municipal levels, given the down-loading—and that burden has been put on volunteers who should not be carrying that burden. Those services are crucial. Those services have to be provided properly, funded properly and not carried on the backs of volunteers.

When food banks started, there was a general recognition that this was something we would only want to have to go on for a short time, but now they've become a necessary part of life. The volunteers who work in those food banks—no question—are doing crucial work for us, but the fact that they have not been brought to the end of their lifespan, found unnecessary because now people have enough to eat, is a shame in this province.

I want to speak about newcomers as well because I have worked with newcomers who are doing volunteer work—desperate for paid work, desperate for work that reflects their credentials and training. In this province, part of the reason we have good volunteers is that we don't have the work that people need and that people deserve. This is the part of volunteerism the government should be addressing.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I was desperately looking to be kind to this government and to this minister.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Go ahead.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trust me, I was, and I'm going to try, but it's just so difficult. I want to talk about the Liberal announcement syndrome, because as you know, they announce, reannounce, post-announce, pronounce and preannounce each and every time on many issues. Let me read something to you that Minister Kennedy talked about three years in relation to all this.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Who?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister Kennedy, ton ami. The Kingston Whig-Standard: "Ontario to Get Rid of Junk Food at Schools."

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They did, she says.

"We don't expect them to be offering junk food to kids in elementary school," Kennedy said....

"But he said he doesn't intend to give schools any extra money due to cancelled contracts."

Their own press release says, "The McGuinty government is making schools healthier places for students to learn by directing school boards to remove all junk food from vending machines in elementary schools...." And the minister is saying, "We did."

The editorial in the Toronto Star says, "Kennedy reminded boards his government is working on a plan to boost the revenue they receive. But that is a long-term proposition and Kennedy wants the pop and chip machines out of the schools right away."

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The reality is that when Rocco Rossi and I went to that school yesterday, where the minister made the announcement, the vending machine was there; the chips were still there. These machines are proliferating like rabbits across the province. Why? Because schools need money. They are offering junk food through these vending machines because they need money. Why else?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order on the government side, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Speaker is going to keep you quiet very soon. Go get them, Speaker.

Why are parents raising \$560 million out of their own pocket every year? They need money. And why are vending machines still in our schools, with the same junk food they wanted to abolish three years ago? Because they need money. Schools need money, adequate dollars, so they can get rid of these vending machines that offer the junk food we desperately want to eliminate.

Yesterday the Premier said—we're getting rid of junk food, are we?—to a question asked by a Toronto Sun journalist—"Not really; we're not. We're going to be consulting the manufacturers." Rocco, didn't he say that?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, he did. He said, "We are going to be"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You're speaking through the Chair, please.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, Speaker, through you.

"We're going to be consulting the manufacturers." What are we consulting about? Is junk food bad, yes or no? Did we do it three years ago? No. Are we doing it again? No, we're going to be consulting manufacturers yet again.

Premier, when are we going to deal with this matter instead of saying, "The revolutionary announcement has come, but you've got to wait for another election before we announce it again with something more progressive"? It's just not good enough.

VISITORS

Mr. Mario Sergio: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Visiting our House today is a wonderful delegation from the sunny island of Sicily, from the city of Trapani, and they are with us today in the west lobby. I'd like to welcome them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Again it's with respect to non-bank, asset-backed commercial papers, the risky roulette wheel investment scheme in which your government invested over 700 million taxpayer dollars. Yesterday you told this House, "Ontario has been investing in these papers for 15 years." This simply isn't true. In fact, it was only under your government that such high-risk investments were authorized.

The minister owes this House an apology for making statements in here that are contrary to the facts. I ask, will the minister make that apology now?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. What the previous government did do was invest it under the broad parameters of the FAA, the Financial Administration Act. We invested in 1994, 1995 and all the way through to 2004. In 2004, this government brought forward a regulation to clearly define not only that we are investing in them—because we had been for 10 years prior—but to give greater clarity to the instruments that could be used. The public accounts are clear and the records of the Ontario Financing Authority are clear. What isn't clear is the opposition's understanding of the process.

Again, under the broad parameters of the act the previous government purchased them. We brought greater clarity, greater transparency and greater public accountability to the precise instruments that were purchased.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: One again the minister is not being straight with the facts. The reality is that the non-bank conduits that are now frozen under the Montreal accord were initially issued into the Canadian market in January 2002, the majority of them after October 2003. So for you to stand up in this House day after day and say that these are similar to investments made 10, 12, or 15 years ago is totally inaccurate. I have the order in council dated November 4, 2007, and I'll ask a page to take it to the minister. It's signed by the former Minister of Finance, and maybe that's why he's the former minister. These are investments Moody's wouldn't rate; Standard and Poor's called them "a leap of faith." But you ignored the warnings, took the leap with somebody else's money—the taxpayers'—and lost quite possibly over \$200 million. And then you make it worse by puffing out your chest, blowharding your way through question period—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the member to withdraw his description of the Minister of Finance, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I will, under protest. I don't think it's a good decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd appreciate it if you would just withdraw, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, I want to repeat for members of the House and members of the public, Ontario has been buying asset-backed commercial papers since 1994. Beginning in 1998, Ontario began buying non-bank asset-backed commercial papers—1998, 1999, 2000. They did it under the broad parameters of the Financial Administration Act. In 2004, this government and my predecessor brought forward a regulation that further clarified what instruments could be used. I'd also remind members that such bodies as the Caisse de dépôt, the Alberta treasury, most of the big banks, the Ontario teachers' pension plan, the Sun-Times Media Group, and a variety of other public and private large, successful organizations have purchased these as well.

There will be a writedown; we estimate it'll be less than \$100 million. The facts are we've been buying these things—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: In reality, asset-backed commercial paper investment issued by non-banks only came into existence in 2002.

The minister himself, when he was questioned by the media, said the loss was going to be "a lot of dollars." Yesterday he said it would be around \$100 million; now he's saying it's less. Our estimates could be as high as \$220 million, a lot of money. It's the full cost of this government's promise to reduce emergency room wait times, PSA testing. Even if we take the minister at his word, it's only—that's a Liberal \$100 million; that's the full budget for this government's climate change promises, the full cost of promises to first-time home-buyers.

The minister must be aware that one of his colleagues lost his job over the slush fund that totalled \$32 million. Minister, at the very least, you owe taxpayers an apology. Will you do that today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There is a sum of money that may be written down, and as I pointed out yesterday to the member, the net impact on the province's statements will likely be none because of the reinvestment procedures.

But when it comes to estimates and when it comes to trusting somebody's judgment on estimates, this was the gang who said they had a balanced budget in their last budget and left a deficit of \$5.6 billion. This is the same Leader of the Opposition who was a member of a government that in fact bought these commercially backed papers from 1995 through to 2003 without clarity, without saying what the instruments were, and continued to do so.

These types of losses are hitting virtually every financial institution around. Ontario's exposure has been, relative to others, small. We all regret this, but this government will continue to manage the affairs of the province properly with growth and greater—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again to the Minister of Finance, and returning to this potential \$200-million loss and the decision of your government to play high-stakes poker with taxpayers' money: As this minister huffed and puffed his way through question period, and he's again doing it today, he could have told this House that his government changed the law, but he didn't. This isn't the open and transparent government they promised during the election campaign. In fact, it's the same contempt for transparency they showed during slushgate, and it's why the Auditor General needs to be asked to investigate this growing scandal. Will the minister do the right thing and call in the auditor?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It was this opposition that yesterday said that nobody had any idea of the amounts prior to this week. In fact, on August 24, CanWest News Service story, page E2; August 24, National Post, page 1 of the Financial Post; August 25, National Post, page 2; Toronto, August 25, Toronto Star business, page 1. All of them declared—and by the way, Ontario was the first; it led all the banks and all of the other organizations in terms of disclosure of what the exposure was.

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So there's been full disclosure. It goes back to August. It was well covered. The Ministry of Finance spoke publicly about it on more than a dozen occasions. The writedown will likely be less than \$100 million, and the net impact on our statements will likely be nothing. The member opposite should get his facts straight. They continually put out facts that are not entirely accurate. That's a good example of another one.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As my colleague said, "Why are they afraid to call in the auditor?" They didn't come clean about the existence of the order in council. They did it behind closed doors. It was never made public. What we have is a government that secretly changed the laws to allow them to gamble with taxpayers' money—money they're supposed to be the trusted stewards of—and then they tried to cover it up. They call it "legislative housekeeping," but what they really mean is that they swept it under the rug. They hid their gambling habit from the public. Why? Because they were using someone else's money. In the private sector, you'd lose your job or go to jail.

The Auditor General must investigate this. The minister has the authority and the moral obligation to ask the auditor general to do so. Will he?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Public accounts can examine this; public accounts can ask the auditor to do that. I would point out that a number of private sector—the member opposite suggests people in the private sector would go to jail for this. Well, all of the big banks this quarter are taking writedowns. Let me give you some—Russel Metals, Air Canada, Toronto Pearson International Airport, Sun-Times Media Group. All have taken writedowns or are going to take writedowns in these.

These investments represented less than 10% of our cash reserves. The writeoff will be a smaller portion of

that still. The net impact will be likely zero on the province's statements. While none of us like this situation, and none of the other financial institutions that have been hit by this, this is the reality. We've managed the province's finances prudently.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I guess the minister isn't reading the financial press. How many CEOs have lost their jobs over the last year or two because of bad investments like the one you're defending here today? He comes into this House and makes statements contradicted by the facts just hours later. This is the same minister who was in charge when the Ontario cricket association got its infamous \$1-million grant in the slush fund scandal—ducking, weaving and trying to avoid his responsibility in choosing to spin the roulette wheel with taxpayers' money on investments that reputable investment bond rating agencies described as a leap of faith.

We have to wonder why he won't do right thing and ask the Auditor General to investigate. If you've got nothing to hide, why are you afraid to do it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the OFA is completely audited. These decisions are subject to public accounts review. Finally, we just need to make sure we have the facts correct. Less than 10% of our cash reserves were in here. There is a potential writedown of up to \$100 million. It will have a net zero effect on our books. Our exposure was smaller than many other comparable organizations.

The province of Ontario under the leadership of Premier McGuinty eliminated a \$5.6-billion deficit that that member and his party left the province. So if we want to talk about proper and prudent financial management, this government is delivering balanced budgets, better health care, better education and a cleaner environment, all in the context of balanced budgets and prudent fiscal management.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. My question is this: What does the Premier have to say to the family of Harnek Singh Sidhu, who died after waiting 12 hours in the emergency room of the Premier's profit-driven, corporate consortia hospital in Brampton?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The two aspects of the question: First of all, I extend my deepest sympathies to the families who have been affected by this loss, their friends and their community; secondly, I take great issue with the characterization of a new, publicly owned, publicly accountable, publicly run hospital in Brampton, in the province of Ontario. We're proud of that hospital, proud of the people who work there and proud of the work that is taking place there.

I think it's unfortunate that somehow the leader of the NDP would link this tragedy with the means by which we financed the construction of this hospital. I think that is entirely unfair.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The family of Mr. Sidhu knows all about the financing of the hospital; they contributed \$25,000 to the community campaign. But Mr. Sidhu's son, Sandeep, described the 12-hour emergency room wait in the *Toronto Star* as, "Animals taken to the vet get better treatment." Will the Premier listen to Mr. Sidhu's grieving son, Sandeep, and call a public inquiry into this unfortunate death?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: Building on the Premier's comments, of course we express sympathy in any circumstance where an individual passes. In the circumstances related to the operation of a new hospital in Brampton, a hospital that is currently benefiting from more than 200 additional employees helping to enhance long-awaited services in the community of Brampton, it is the obligation of the local hospital to work with their community. I know that steps were taken on that basis yesterday and that the leadership of William Osler will continue to work with the progressive community of Brampton—a growing and strong community—to seek to address any concerns and to enhance the quality of care and services that are there. And we will continue to make sure we play our role in ensuring that they have the resources to be able to do that.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier's and the Minister of Health's remarks, shall we say, contrast with the remarks by the head of the hospital corporation, who acknowledged that "the hospital is short-staffed. Part of the problem is that the province has not yet set the operating budget.

"Could we do a hell of a lot better with a fulsome budget? Absolutely," he said.

My question, though, is to the Premier. Will the Premier acknowledge that Mr. Sidhu's death is part of a troubling pattern at the Premier's profit-driven, corporate consortia hospital, a pattern that includes patients waiting 24 hours for essential health services like emergency appendectomy surgery and treatment for chest pains? And if the Premier agrees that these things are alarming, will he call a public inquiry to get to the bottom of what has gone wrong here?

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, let's be clear that any suggestion that a brick popped out of a wall in a building and caused these circumstances, which is really at the heart of the assertion the honourable member makes, is itself rather difficult to accept. It is that honourable member, I suppose, through benefits he has gained in this place, who might be able to talk about being mortgage-free. In the circumstances where we seek to rebuild hospital capacity in Ontario, we've determined that to have 100 projects ongoing, it's necessary to pay those over time, just as I'm doing with my house.

On the issue of operational funds for that hospital, I can say that Mr. Richards' comments are incorrect. Not only does the hospital know its operating budget and the post-construction operating plan implications for this year; it also has a very good sense of what those will be for the next two years. We'll continue to work with that

hospital through the local health integration network to make sure they have the resources to build up their service to the people of Brampton.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The Minister of Health may think this is about bricks; this is about the unfortunate death of a man who waited 12 hours in the emergency room, a very sick man who waited 12 hours and eventually died.

My question to the Premier is this: Does the Premier believe that his profit-driven, corporate consortia hospital that cost \$300 million more than a publicly financed, not-for-profit facility would have cost, that has fewer beds than were originally promised to the people of Brampton and that is clearly having big trouble delivering the high-quality health care services the people of Brampton deserve—does the Premier believe that Mr. Sidhu was well served by this hospital?

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Hon. George Smitherman: I would repeat to the honourable member, to the family and to the people in the community who are concerned that we have extraordinary sympathy for any circumstance that results in a death. But we, in this place, must also be inordinately mindful of a couple of things. Firstly, the provision of hospital service is continuing to be run by the same hospital board that ran Peel Memorial, 10 kilometres away on the other side of town. It's now being done with more than 200 additional staff in a state-of-the-art facility with a dramatic increase in capacity. I also want to be clear in suggesting to the honourable member that accountability for running 156 distinct and independent health care corporations must, of course, fall to those who are making clinical decisions in that environment, supported by the professional staff and the administration.

We'll continue to work with that hospital and all hospitals in Ontario to make sure they fulfill their very crucial and important responsibilities, and we'll do that alongside our partners in the local health integration network as well.

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question was to the Premier, and my question was, did the Premier think that Mr. Sidhu and his family were well served by this 12-hour wait in the emergency room?

In light of the tragedy, I want to remind the Premier of something he said in 2003, when the Premier promised to finance all new hospitals publicly because he said that profit-driven hospitals like the one in Brampton would lead "to the Americanization of health care" and "would cost more and deliver less." Well, it has cost more, and it certainly seems to be delivering less. In the case of Mr. Sidhu, he waited 12 hours in the emergency ward and he is now deceased.

Does the Premier think that Mr. Sidhu was well served? If you do, say so; if you don't, call a public inquiry so the family can learn what really happened here.

Hon. George Smitherman: Firstly, we believe that the people who serve the residents of Brampton and greater area at the William Osler Health Centre are dedicated to the challenging task they provide, and we'll continue to work with them.

I want to say to the honourable member that he talks about a capital model but he doesn't fess up and recognize that for the five years he was in the government of Ontario, that government built one hospital in Wawa—a very small hospital. Through the ambitious efforts of my colleague the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, we're involved in 100 construction projects investing \$5 billion or \$6 billion in long-awaited renewal of hospital stock in the province of Ontario.

We acknowledge that emergency rooms do pose challenges for too many Ontarians, and accordingly our dedicated efforts will be to enhance the quality of public services and to enhance the circumstances of performance in all of Ontario's emergency rooms, and William Osler will of course be among the hospitals we're working very closely with.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think it's very unfortunate that when someone has waited 12 hours in the emergency room and eventually dies there, members of the McGuinty government try to blame someone for what may have happened 20 years ago.

Premier, my question to you is this: Given that you refuse to respect the wishes of Mr. Sidhu's family and call a public inquiry, will the Premier at least join me on Sunday in Brampton at a rally in memory of Mr. Sidhu, meet Mr. Sidhu's family face-to-face and explain to everyone in Brampton what is happening here when a very sick man can wait 12 hours in an emergency ward, eventually die, and the Premier and his Minister of Health want to talk about health care events 20 years ago? Will you at least do that, Premier?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's the honourable member himself who invites the contrast between the performance of a government that has decided to invest in hospitals and one that he was a senior member of that did nothing on this point, and it was your fixation on the issue of capital.

Yesterday, the hospital did the appropriate thing, as they are the accountable party for the delivery of services in this community: They met with the local community. This is the appropriate response in the circumstance. We have sympathy, of course, for any Ontarian who has passed, no matter the circumstances. But the obligation for the provision of care in the Brampton community, the decisions around that, the clinical decisions, are not made on my desk; they're made by the people who work in that hospital, from the clinical staff to the senior administration. Appropriately, they met with the community yesterday; they're working through these matters. We expect, of course, that there will be opportunities to enhance the quality of care in all emergency room environments. That's why we made it a focus of our election campaign and why it will be a focus of our efforts in this term of our government.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today His Excellency Danzan Lundeejantsan, Chairman of the State Great Hural (Parliament) of Mongolia, and a parliamentary delegation. Accompanying the delegation is His Excellency Ambassador Gotov, Mongolia's ambassador to Canada. We warmly welcome you all to the province of Ontario.

New question.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Finance—and I'll ask if one of the pages could deliver to the Minister of Finance these documents, which are the public accounts for the province of Ontario for 2006-07.

Minister, yesterday—and I've got a quote from Hansard regarding your comments on the hundreds of billions of dollars of Ontario taxpayers' money lost in risky investment schemes. You said, "This is all documented in the public accounts." You went on to further say, "We routinely look at these—our members do." Could the minister instruct the House exactly what page these risky investments are detailed upon?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They are contained in the annual statement of the Ontario Financing Authority, which is part of the legislative mandate of my ministry. And just to inform the member, in the event that he has not had a chance to read that document—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the opposition members to tone it down a little, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In the event the member hasn't had a chance to go through that document, he might have wanted to have looked at the August 24 CanWest News Service story. He might have wanted to have looked at the August 24 National Post story; that was on page 1. He might have wanted to have looked at the Toronto Star story of August 25, which was on page 1. In addition to those and to the Ontario Financing Authority minutes and annual reports that are audited and run by a board composed of people as diverse as Jack Mintz and others, he had all those opportunities. I'd invite him to read the business pages more carefully and also—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What I did is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw his comment, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I say to the minister that we did in fact read Hansard from yesterday, when you clearly said that these were outlined in the public accounts. We find out today that your comments were, to say it charitably,

not in meeting with the facts. My colleague the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Runciman, further pointed out that some of the things you said yesterday as well on another important matter were not consistent with facts. So we seem to have a problem here, I say with respect to my colleague, the Minister of Finance: The statements he's made in the Legislature do not seem to be wholly accurate around this issue. I worry he is trying to cover something up. He seems more concerned about protecting himself than protecting taxpayers, who may be on the hook for up to \$200 million in these risky investments.

The only way to get to the bottom of this is if you call in the Auditor General. Will you pick up the phone today and call him in to get to the bottom of this matter?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The numbers involved have been clearly outlined publicly, both in the public press as well as in the documents of the province of Ontario. The member opposite's party provided us with an order in council that not only defined the asset class but defined those instruments under the asset class. That's all been public for more than four years. In addition, the story has been well reported. Many other large organizations, including the Alberta treasury, Caisse de dépôt, and the Ontario teachers' pension plan, have been affected by developments in this particular class.

This government has eliminated a \$5.6-billion deficit that was left by that government. In fact, the prudent management of our economy and the books of this government allow us to invest in education, to invest in health care, and to deliver the kinds of services the people of Ontario have come to expect.

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FINANCEMENT DES HÔPITAUX

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question s'adresse au premier ministre. Comment est-ce que le premier ministre peut nous expliquer l'augmentation des coûts de construction de l'hôpital de Sarnia, un projet financé par le secteur privé à profit? Les coûts ont passé de 149 \$ millions l'an dernier à 319 \$ millions cette année. On parle ici d'une augmentation de 179 \$ millions qui auraient pu être investis dans les soins aux patients pour les résidents de Sarnia ou de toute la province.

Hon. George Smitherman: Merci pour votre question. I am a work in progress on this and other matters.

I want to thank the honourable member for her question. I anticipated that it might have come from another honourable member. We are, as on the earlier matter, enormously proud to be in a position in the province of Ontario to be investing again in the construction of hospitals. In the case of Sarnia, we have a hospital that is underway. We have a hospital that is under construction with a guaranteed price. This is very different from the circumstances we used to have, when the price came in well after the building had actually been constructed. Now we have a guaranteed price, and that is well known.

It differs from some of the estimated prices, and that explains why there is a differential, which you might characterize in a different way. This is a new model, where the cost overruns don't come later. We have a guaranteed price for construction and another new hospital underway in Sarnia, Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: What families across Ontario want is the building of publicly run, publicly controlled and publicly financed hospitals without delay. Instead, public health dollars are being wasted on high interest rates, unnecessary lawyers' fees, consultants' fees and money for middlemen. It's happening at the private, for-profit hospitals in Brampton, Sarnia, North Bay, and the list goes on. The total cost overrun for the Liberals' private hospital scheme is climbing over \$1 billion. Why is the Premier building private-money hospitals that cost more and deliver less?

Hon. George Smitherman: No. I do think that delivering less was your term in office. Under that term, they had a chance to mention a minute ago that the only hospital, the only new hospital, constructed in five years of NDP was a very nice, but small, hospital in Wawa, Ontario. I contrast that to the offer—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: Maybe you can get a question.

I think it's very important that we acknowledge that the province of Ontario has an ambitious, more than \$30-billion infrastructure renewal in the hospital sector—\$5 billion or \$6 billion of new hospitals that are coming to life. The hospital in Sarnia is a perfectly good example of how a long-awaited hospital is replacing two very tired and worn-out facilities. We're doing so on the basis where a value-for-money audit has concluded—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the leader of the third party to come to order.

Hon. George Smitherman: —that the taxpayer is well served by a model that offers a guaranteed price rather than the prior model which, in the case of Thunder Bay, as an example, saw exorbitant cost overruns all dealt with later. We have a guaranteed price that a hospital would be built on time or on budget and, if it's not, all of the obligation for the circumstances falls upon—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question today is for the Minister of Labour. I would like to ask you about the Fairness for Military Families Act, which was tabled and unanimously passed by this Legislature this week. Until now, military reservists were not protected by legislation to ensure they could return to their civilian jobs or comparable jobs with the same employer when a tour of duty is completed. There are many worries and concerns individuals have when they go overseas on a military

deployment. The last thing they should have to worry about is whether they will have their job when they come home. Minister, please give us details regarding this new legislation and the positive impact it has on military families.

Hon. Brad Duguid: On behalf of all of us, I'd like to commend and thank the member for Ottawa-Orléans for his leadership and for his advocacy on this issue. It's the advocacy of this member and other members in this House that helped us bring forward this very important legislation. This amendment recognizes the vital role that the Canadian Forces reservists play in protecting Canada's interests at home and abroad.

Interjections.

Hon. Brad Duguid: If the members opposite could stop heckling, they'd be able to hear me thank them and all members of this House for unanimously supporting this bill and the leadership of the Premier within this bill on Monday. The support of all members of this House enabled us all to ensure that not only will reservists not have to worry about their missions when they're abroad; all they have to worry about now is getting home safe, and that's important. They don't have to worry about whether they're going to have a job when they get home. I thank all members—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, that is indeed good news. It is very comforting to know that when an individual leaves their family and their community to represent their country on a military deployment, they no longer have to worry about losing their civilian jobs when they return home.

I have many small businesses in my riding, and I know they will be interested to know how this change will impact them. Could you please explain to me how this will affect employers who have reservists on staff?

Hon. Brad Duguid: First and foremost, I think employers, like all Ontarians, are going to consider it their duty to do all they can to support these brave young men and women for putting their lives at risk for our country. I expect that the response from employers will be that it's a privilege for them to be able to assist these young men and women. When a military reservist returns home, the employer will be required to reinstate the reservist in the same position, if it exists, or in a comparable position if it doesn't.

Our ministry will enforce this legislation, but as I said, I don't expect employers to do anything but embrace this initiative, because employers, like all Ontarians, have full respect and admiration for these brave young men and women who are placing their lives at risk to protect our country and our property.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Robert Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your election to office and look forward to serving with you, and I would like to thank all hon-

ourable members of the House for the warm welcome when I first came.

My question is to the Minister of Health. In October, the people of Sarnia-Lambton were shocked to find that the cost of their long-promised and much-delayed hospital had more than doubled from an initial cost of \$114 million to over \$250 million. Many people believe it will be closer to \$325 million when completed. Would the minister tell this House and the people of Sarnia-Lambton how, on your watch, the cost of this project got so out of control?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to welcome my honourable friend. I look forward to visiting the community and witnessing the construction of what we all agree is a long-awaited and much-overdue hospital.

I would make just one point to the honourable member with respect to prices: Until such time as you have a locked-in tendered price that is guaranteed, then any number that came before is simply an estimate. The numbers you threw out before were estimates developed in your very community by the hospital corporation, and once there was an established tendered price, then we all know in reality the bricks-and-mortar cost of building a very substantial and modern state-of-the-art facility in Sarnia.

Our government has, in the meantime, taken the responsibility for paying 90% of the bricks-and-mortar cost of this hospital, and the implication is that the good people of Sarnia, on the basis of the resources they've raised in partnership with the province of Ontario, will be able to see this long-awaited new facility open on time and on budget, and if it isn't, all the implications—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: My constituents have been waiting many years for this project; I agree with the minister on that. The community has also been very generous in fundraising for this new hospital. These increased costs for the hospital are a direct result of the McGuinty government's 3-D health care policy: dithering, delay and denial.

My question to the minister today is, are the residents of Sarnia-Lambton going to be expected to raise any of these increasing costs, and will my constituents have to foot the bill for the government's dithering?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's interesting, of course, that you've adopted the same tag line from Mr. Tory's time in the Legislature. What I find interesting is no acknowledgment on the honourable member's part that for eight and a half years his party was in office. So if there was any dithering, I think we could both agree that that happened much more significantly on your watch. On ours, there's construction activity on-site, and Sarnia is getting a hospital that they have long required.

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As a result of the improvements that we've made on the local share, where the province of Ontario is paying 90% of the bricks and mortar, I do believe that the investments to date in the bricks and mortar by the

community of Sarnia will allow that hospital project to move forward. Additional costs associated with things like equipment and information technology, which are at the discretion of the local hospital, may be a matter that requires ongoing support from the local community in partnership. We will be proud to open this new and long-awaited state-of-the-art modern facility for the good people of Sarnia.

URANIUM MINE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. Plans for new nuclear reactors in Ontario have helped drive uranium prices through the roof, and now communities in Frontenac county are threatened with a potential uranium mine. Will you do your part to stop fueling uranium exploration in Frontenac county and cancel your nuclear megaproject today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. I think he's quite aware of some of the difficult challenges associated with ensuring that we have an adequate supply of reliable electricity in a way that provides the least compromise to our natural environment. We think that the modernization of our nuclear capacity represents an integral part of a responsible plan on a go-forward basis.

I had the great and good fortune the other day to meet with Ms. Dillman, an individual who is passionate and committed and nothing if not well-intentioned, a woman who has the full courage of her convictions. She is asking effectively that I put in place a moratorium on the mining of uranium in the province of Ontario. We are not mining any uranium at present, I can say that, but I cannot agree to place a moratorium, given our future requirements not only for our nuclear capacity but also for things like the production of radioisotopes which are used in the radiation treatment for our cancer patients.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, in a letter to you last week, David Suzuki wrote, "As you know, I think it's nuts to embark on such an expensive megaproject when there are so many questions from a nuclear option."

You've talked with Donna Dillman; you've heard from David Suzuki. You're embarked on a path that has huge economic and environmental implications without a full environmental assessment. Will you turn around, come to your senses and abandon this nuclear megaproject?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it's important to understand that what we're talking about here is the modernization of our nuclear capacity. I think 41% of our energy today comes from nuclear. That will drop to 31% in 2025. We are making tough choices here. I would prefer not to have to make any of them, but the fact is we have to because that is our responsibility in government.

One of the difficult decisions we've made is to phase out coal-fired generation in the province of Ontario. If I could replace all of our coal-fired generation with energy from wind, solar and other renewable sources like hydro-

electric capacity, I would in an instant; we just can't do that.

So we need to make some difficult decisions. We've decided to modernize our nuclear capacity because, among other things, it does not contribute to the single greatest challenge faced by humanity today in the minds of so many experts, which is climate change and global warming. The good news about nuclear is that it does not contribute to global warming.

HEALTHY LIVING

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Health Promotion. Minister, congratulations on your recent election victory and appointment to cabinet. I'm sure you'll make an excellent addition to the McGuinty team.

On December 3, the town of Collingwood and the Ontario Winter Games organizing committee held the 2008 winter games kick-off, with 100 days remaining before the games. For the 2008 Ontario Winter Games, our government is providing over \$590,000 to support the many athletes who will take part there. More than 3,000 athletes, coaches and officials will participate in the games, supported by more than 800 volunteers.

Minister, in what other ways is our government supporting amateur athletes across this province?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election.

I am humbled to be a member of this Legislature. I thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for his question. Our government is providing \$23.7 million to support amateur sports this year. This is an increase of almost 33% since 2003. On November 5, I was delighted to meet the Canadian rowing team upon their return from competition. These individuals are role models in their communities, and they exemplify the importance of investing in amateur athletes. They inspire us to live active, healthier lifestyles, and they make us proud as Ontarians. Our government values the contribution and the personal sacrifices that Ontario athletes make.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: This truly demonstrates our government's commitment to support Ontario's athletes, who make us proud on both the national and the international stage. But I'm also proud of our government's support to local communities to create opportunities for Ontarians to participate in daily physical activities.

Minister, Variety Village in my riding of Scarborough Southwest, for example, received a two-year grant in 2004-05 under our communities in action fund initiative to support their fitness and fun for everyone program, which provides physical activities for children living with disabilities. Minister, how else is our government supporting enhanced physical activities in this province?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I am proud to say that our communities in action fund is providing access to sports and recreation activities to Ontarians, regardless of their age, ability or income. Over the last four years, our

government has provided approximately \$25 million in grants to over 800 organizations. Communities know they need their best, and we are providing them with the support they need to keep their communities active and healthy.

But our government recognizes that we need to do more to engage Ontarians in healthy eating and active living, and we need to be innovative in our approach. Thus, on December 1, our government removed the provincial sales tax on bicycle helmets and bicycles under \$1,000.

We know that prevention is better than cure. That is why we are encouraging Ontarians to become more active, to eat healthy and to quit smoking, because the health of Ontario's economy depends on the health of Ontarians.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke to withdraw his comment that he made.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What was it?

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

LICENCE PLATE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, we found out this morning that in order to get a personalized licence plate in Ontario, one has to go through you. One of my constituents applied for a plate. I have a copy of it here, Mr. Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member not to bring a prop to the House, please.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I apologize, Mr. Speaker, if it's a prop. I will ask the page to take it over to the Premier.

Premier, it was denied because of its religious connotation. Could you tell me and my constituents what that religious connotation would be? And since the minister seems to be unable to handle these things and you are Ontario's new self-anointed licence plate approver, I ask you whether you could fix this on behalf of my constituent Gary Battram.

Premier, has your intervention fixed the problem or just solved it for the newspaper?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the Premier very much for sending this question to me. Delightful.

I look at some former ministers of transportation in the House here who had to go through this process over the years, probably much less quietly than now. When this program was established under the Conservative government many years ago, when the criteria were established and modified from time to time, very difficult decisions were made by the people within the Ministry of Transportation who review these. I know that each of those ministers knows how difficult that was; certainly I know that. What I indicated this morning was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer?

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Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, I'll say in my supplementary what I indicated this morning. But I know that the member would know this has been going on for a long time, and these are difficult decisions that people made. In the supplementary, I'll answer further to him.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Premier, I'm sure you looked at it and I'm sure the minister looked at it. The letters on the plate are "PRSHNURS." The applicant intended it to read "Parish nurse." It is for a retired nurse who volunteers at the parish homeless shelter. "Parish" could be political or religious. Are you going to start rejecting plates with MPP on them? I think they would be a greater cause for road rage than this one.

The Premier said this morning in the scrum that it's one of those silly things government does that makes them outright laughable. It wasn't laughable to my constituent, who was supposed to get this plate for a Christmas present. Premier, since no one else in your government seems to be capable of fixing it, will you promise today that you will have this lady's licence plate in time for Christmas?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate all of the help I've had from members of the opposition.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: You need it. Nobody helped you as much as the Premier.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thought the member was going to ask a question on day trading at Agricorp.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: No, I wasn't. I was asking about this and why the Premier—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Could we have the mic that's on dealt with, please? Thank you.

Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: As I indicated today, hearing many of these instances coming forward, it's time that we looked at the criteria which have been established for evaluating individual licence plates. By looking at the criteria, I thought we should get some outside people, perhaps people, for instance, who are knowledgeable in the field of legal affairs, human rights, traffic safety and so on to give us some advice on this. I'm looking forward with anticipation to that. Meanwhile, any who are renewing a licence plate will be able to have their licence plate renewed as is.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. On Monday, the minister claimed tremendous progress on the issue of autism. I just want to ask the minister if she really thinks it's tremendous progress to keep 1,000 children with autism on an ever-growing list for treatment when, four years ago, your Premier promised that they were going to take care of this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to again talk about some of the progress we have made for kids with autism since we were elected in 2003. While there is still much

to do, we acknowledge that we have made tremendous progress.

Let me just talk about a few of the things. We have removed the age six cut-off that the Tory government imposed, we have tripled funding for services with autism, and we have almost tripled the number of children receiving IBI therapy. In fact, since this Legislature last met, we have expanded IBI even further, to 210 more children. We've announced a new respite program to give more than 3,000 families—the parents—a break from the difficult challenges of having a child with autism, and more than 800 kids with autism have gone to summer camp thanks to a new program we have supported.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the minister knows very well that it was not an initiative of the government but a force of the courts that created the movement on this particular file, and that is absolutely shameful. The minister knows very well that families continue to mortgage their homes to try to get services. Families continue to go into great debt to try to get services for their children. So the bottom line is, if it wasn't for the action of the courts, this government would have done nothing. When is this government going to actually deliver on funding to clear the waiting list for those children and the families that need autism services in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You might want to check your facts on that court decision.

I can tell you that while you have been playing politics with this issue and these families, we have been getting down to work. But we're not done. We are expanding capacity in this system, and you know it. For example, our new college program to train autism therapists has already graduated 200 new therapists, with 300 more to be enrolled next year. We've added three new colleges that are instructing in IBI therapy, autism therapy, including St. Clair in Windsor, Fanshawe College in London and Lambton College in Sarnia, bringing the total to 12 sites delivering this program. Our next step will be delivering IBI services in schools so that children can get the services in their own schools.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the newly minted Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Last week, I was happy to announce an NOHFC investment of \$100,000 for Synergy Wood Ventures in Atikokan that will help them upgrade their facilities and position them competitively in the value-added marketplace. That's the latest example of how our government's refocused and revitalized heritage fund is truly spurring economic development across the north, from Thunder Bay to Sudbury, in communities large and small, stimulating both the private sector and the public sector in economic opportunities and job creation. What more can we expect from the NOHFC moving forward?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I would like to thank the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan for his question. I

truly want to commend him on his tireless work in the riding and congratulate him on his re-election.

If I may, I'll take this opportunity to remind members of the great work that our government has been able to accomplish through our re-invigorated northern Ontario heritage fund programs. Since 2003, we have created or sustained over 9,100 jobs through the NOHFC—jobs that would not otherwise be there. In addition, we have provided training and employment opportunities to young people in the north, including helping 735 young people find employment through youth internship and co-ops—some in your riding—and helping 120 young entrepreneurs create business opportunities in the north. Moving forward, I'll be touting these and other NOHFC funding initiatives. In fact, I'm looking forward to chairing my first NOHFC board meeting this Friday in Thunder Bay, where I look forward to making some positive announcements with my colleague from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: We're hoping there will be more good news coming in that regard. It's fair to say that this government has been very proactive when it comes to economic diversification in our communities. Unlike the NDP, who, as of last week, seem to think that investment in the north is a waste of money, our government believes that we should be partners in economic innovation in the north. Certainly, the millions of dollars in NOHFC funding for the Molecular Medicine Research Centre in Thunder Bay was well invested. It will create hundreds of highly skilled, high-paying jobs and put Thunder Bay on the leading edge of a vital research field. Also, the substantial funding for the Emergency Services Training Centre in Thunder Bay means emergency response personnel from the north will be able to train and develop expertise at a state-of-the-art facility in northern Ontario—another great investment. What further steps will you take, Minister, to encourage economic diversification through the NOHFC?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As my good friend and colleague has correctly noted, the NOHFC is an important tool in the north. Let me say that this Premier, this cabinet and this caucus are wholly committed to a northern Ontario that is vibrant and robust. Our firm pledge in the 2007 campaign—reiterated in last week's throne speech—to increase funding for the NOHFC from \$60 million to \$100 million annually is proof of that.

One area that I am particularly excited about is our support for information technology. To date, we have invested over \$25 million to develop more comprehensive cellular and broadband networks throughout the north, and I fully expect that we'll invest even more. We are motivated by a goal of connecting the far north and our remote communities, but also achieving productivity all along the TransCanada Highway. We recognize that, especially in today's fast-paced world, being connected enhances economic potential, educational opportunities, even—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Health. In your last Parliament, you made a funding announcement totalling \$9.9 million for six residential hospices providing end-of-life care for Ontarians. I commend you for that.

Missing from that list of six was Hospice Renfrew. Minister, you are very aware of the tremendous efforts being put forth by the team of local volunteers, craftsmen and contractors who have joined together to make Hospice Renfrew a reality; in fact, it's scheduled to open in early January. Will you treat Ontario's first rural hospice as you have treated six others in the province of Ontario and provide adequate funding to help in their construction costs?

1510

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for the question, and I hope he would convey to the good people—and there are a lot of them—who are lending their support to Hospice Renfrew that we're so proud of them. I had a chance to visit, I think on July 8 or 9, the site where construction was well under way. It is very exciting to know that they're going to open in January. They will open, as we're building 30 residential hospices in the province of Ontario—for the first time ever, they will open with operational support. No doubt about that; that's in place. I commit to the honourable member, as I did to the people in Renfrew that day, that I'm working diligently inside my ministry to identify the necessary resources to support not only Hospice Renfrew but also the others that are coming into emergence. I endeavour to keep the honourable member and other members posted on the progress I'm making in trying to find those much-needed resources.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just to help you with your calendar, Minister, it was July 12. Maybe I pay more attention to your visits than you do sometimes.

We do appreciate those encouraging words; however, I didn't hear those accompanied by a commitment. As you know, the other hospices have received grants from \$1.15 million to just over \$2 million. As you intimated on that day, and we appreciated your visit—you didn't say it categorically, but you did intimate that Renfrew should expect the same kind of treatment as everywhere else. What we'd like from you today is a commitment, not that we're going to get at this, not that we think it's a great idea, not that we appreciate the great work of the people in Renfrew, because I know you do, and we do, but could we have a commitment that they will have that funding, so that Ontario's first rural hospice will be treated just as the others have been?

Hon. George Smitherman: It would not be appropriate for me to offer the commitment the member seeks before I have actually put my fingertips on the exact resource. But I would tell the honourable member that it's much more likely that the party that determined it was necessary to keep a health premium in place will have those resources than one that promised to reduce health care spending by \$3 billion.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. A few weeks ago, you decided against using your authority to immediately ban bisphenol A in children's products, despite numerous studies showing it has serious developmental implications for children, including relationship to type 2 diabetes and obesity. Two separate studies sponsored by the US National Institutes of Health have detailed concerns about infant exposure to BPA. Today, Ontario parents are learning that bisphenol A is also present in infant formula. Based on this new information, will you immediately take action to get bisphenol A out of infant formula and out of children's products?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank the member for his question. As he knows, we are in the process of setting up an expert panel to take a look at not only bisphenol A but also the other toxic materials we'll be dealing with later on in the spring.

I find it kind of interesting, though, that late one night I happened to watch the member on Goldhawk Live, as a matter of fact, when he was asked whether any other jurisdictions have actually banned bisphenol A, and he himself admitted that they're only studying the issue in Norway and that no other jurisdiction has banned it so far. We're taking action. We're setting up an expert panel to report back to us as soon as possible in the spring, so that we can in effect deal with not only that particular issue but also with other toxins that are out there in a meaningful way by legislation in the spring.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On a point of order: I would like to correct my statement in Hansard earlier today in response to the question from the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook. In fact, the public accounts do have the full audited financial statement of the Ontario Financing Authority—volume 2, pages 184 to 194. The Provincial Auditor has concluded, "In my opinion, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the authority."

VISITORS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just like to take this opportunity to introduce Victoria Public School from Goderich. They're here from the great riding of Huron—Bruce. Welcome.

PETITIONS

STRANDHERD-ARMSTRONG BRIDGE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to introduce this petition on the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge once again.

"Whereas the close-knit communities of Barrhaven, Riverside South and Manotick combined have a total population of well over 50,000 people; and

"Whereas the only link between Barrhaven and Riverside South across the Rideau River is a lengthy commute either across the congested Hunt Club bridge or through the village of Manotick, which cannot sustain the traffic; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has identified the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge as a viable alternative to the traffic congestion created at the Hunt Club bridge and on Bridge Street in Manotick; and

"Whereas the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge is a much more environmentally sustainable option for south Ottawa commuters across the Rideau River than either the commute through Manotick or via the Hunt Club bridge; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has identified the cost of the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, including all ramp, road widening and bridge work, at \$105 million; and

"Whereas the city of Ottawa has requested that a third of that funding, approximately \$35 million, be provided by the Ontario Liberal government, and further, that one-third from the federal government has already been committed; and

"The residents of Barrhaven, Riverside South and Manotick are calling on Dalton McGuinty" and the Ontario Liberal government to build the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge.

As a resident of south Ottawa, I support this petition, and I provide it to page Parker.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal: Speaker, let me wish you my sincerest congratulations on your election as Speaker. I know you will do a great job.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than 800,000 Ontarians are living with diabetes and only 10% of this number are people are living with type 1 diabetes. Currently insulin pumps are only available to people living with type 1 diabetes and only until they are 18; diabetes is a lifelong disease. An insulin pump assists people in maintaining and controlling blood sugar levels in order to reduce the number of acute complications and the severity of chronic complications caused by inadequately managed diabetes. An insulin pump is \$5,000 plus \$150 per year for the disposable supplies for persons who are not covered or under 18 years of age. Canadian research indicates that, for every dollar invested in helping Ontarians manage their diabetes appropriately, the government would save \$4 when not having to treat the serious diabetes complications that can develop for inadequately managed diabetes.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that insulin pump coverage should be available for all Ontarians living with diabetes, as the

insulin pump improves both blood sugar management and quality of life for persons living with diabetes.”

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

“Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

“—repainting the crosswalk;

“—a new overhead flashing light crosswalk sign;

“—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south” along Highway 12 “alerting drivers to the reduced speed;

“—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone.”

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of the constituents in the village of Greenbank. Ken Nelski would be one of them, amongst many.

1520

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's a pleasure to be on your right again.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It reads as follows:

“Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

“Whereas ‘day-surgery’ procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the

Mississauga-Halton area, and enable greater access to ‘day surgery’ procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of the petition and ask page Odessa to carry it for me.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just want to thank all members of the assembly for agreeing to allow me to serve as a Deputy Speaker. I'll try to do a good job—although Mr. Runciman pointed out that I may be the first Deputy Speaker that has to throw himself out.

“Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

“Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

“Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by Oak Ridges MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day.”

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Congratulations on your appointment as Deputy Speaker. I know you'll continue to do an excellent job, as you did last term and before that.

I have a petition that's fairly short. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, regarding TTC washroom service:

“Whereas the TTC lacks adequate washroom facilities;

“Whereas this causes a problem for people suffering from ailments such as prostatitis, colitis and other similar problems;

“We, the undersigned, request the TTC to allocate proper funds to build washrooms at their subway stations.”

I agree with this petition and I've affixed my signature to it. I give it to page Nikita, who's with me today.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition from members of Legions supporting the legislation protecting the civilian jobs of peacekeepers, filed by Mount Dennis Branch 31, Toronto; Branch 185, Blenheim; Victory Branch 317, London; Branch 60, Burlington; Branch 36, Dundas; and Branch 479, Niagara Falls.

DECORATIONS OF BRAVERY

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Mr Speaker, first of all, congratulations on your reappointment. I'm sure you'll do a great job, as you did in the past.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

"By signing this petition, I'm adding my voice to those of other Canadians joining Premier Dalton McGuinty's call to extend the eligibility time frame for the Cross of Valour and other decorations of bravery beyond two years. Mr. McGuinty's letter cited these needs that exist in certain situations where an application for bravery may not be submitted within the two-year time limit, citing specifically Constable Chris Garrett's case from the Cobourg police."

I will affix my name to this petition as well.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000 ; and

"Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe-Grey."

Obviously, I agree with the petition and I've signed it.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families"—

Interjections.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Speaker, am I permitted to respond to the questions across the aisle, or not? Probably not. Excuse me, sir, but if you would permit me

to continue with this petition I would be very grateful to you.

The last sentence of this petition reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

I certainly support this petition, and I'm delighted to put my name to it.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have thousands more signatures supporting the legislation to protect civilian jobs of peacekeepers, filed with Long Branch 101, a Toronto Legion branch; Branch 618 of Stittsville; Branch 226 of Arthur; Branch 121 of Guelph-Cambridge and Bell's Corners Branch 593 from Ottawa.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's elementary school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

MILITARY FAMILIES

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have, continuing, thousands more signatures on a petition of Legion members to confirm and support the legislation to protect civilian jobs of peacekeepers. These have been filed by Branch 120, Georgetown; the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, Wing 410, Chatham; the Royal Canadian Air Force Association, Wing 427, London; the Royal

Canadian Air Force Association, Wing 422, of North Bay; and Oshawa Naval Veterans Club.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 2007, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Hamilton Centre.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll be splitting my time with my leader and other members of our caucus for this debate.

It's my pleasure to have the first opportunity to give remarks in this House in regards to inaction by the government, in responding to the throne speech, after having been re-elected in the new riding of Hamilton Centre. I was very pleased with the results obviously, and I'm happy to be here to remind the government of some of the very serious issues facing my community. Unfortunately, not many of those issues were given much attention in the throne speech, and people of Hamilton are quite concerned that their continued struggle on many fronts was not acknowledged.

It's interesting, my first opportunity to remark on the throne speech actually came before the throne speech was delivered. A reporter said to me in a bit of an off-the-record type of discussion, "What do you think is going to be in the throne speech?" I said "Well, we'll see. If it's reflective of the campaign commitments made by the Liberals, there's not really very much there." So we chuckled, and the camera went on, and we went on record.

It's interesting because the same question came up, and I didn't think of it at the time, and that's always the way it happens with me—well, maybe not always, but sometimes. The question was that some people are saying that the throne speech is going to be very small on commitments, considering how many broken promises the government had to deal with over the past four years and that they're going to lower the bar in terms of what they put out there as an agenda after having just been re-elected.

Of course, I didn't think of it at the time, but afterwards, I had this vision in my mind of a limbo bar and the Liberal caucus going lower and lower to try to get under that limbo bar. How low can you go when it comes to not making the kinds of commitments and statements that the people of Ontario want to hear around issues like poverty reduction? No matter how much you sing, my friend from Trinity-Spadina—who is a very good singer—I will not do the limbo. I'm sorry, that's not hap-

pening in this House, my friend, even though you sing very, very well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Go for it.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nonetheless, on the issue of poverty reduction, it's pretty—I want to say "disappointing," but "disappointing" simply does not capture the feeling that I think many of us had in this province when we saw that the only thing that the McGuinty Liberals were prepared to do on the poverty issue was to set a target for the target, set a target date for the targets to be announced, at which time we'll find out if and when this government has any intention at all of tackling the alarming rise of poverty in this province.

I can tell you that this is an issue that not only has been recently brought to light in a forceful way by the United Way of Greater Toronto, but also in the city of Hamilton, this is an ongoing issue that we have been struggling with. People are being crushed by the weight of the poverty that is lasting and growing in this province, and has become ongoing in terms of inter-generational poverty. It has to stop. There has got to be some real positive action.

Of course, New Democrats had some great ideas as to how we could actually get to some action, as opposed to simply more rhetoric and setting of targets, more of what my leader liked to say during the election, Liberals recanting this phrase of being so—"Oh, we feel your pain." Do you recall that? Do my colleagues recall that? "We feel your pain."

The government likes to say that they feel the pain of people living in poverty, that they feel the pain of people who are losing their jobs in this province. Unfortunately, they don't feel that pain at a close enough proximity to actually move them into action to get something done about that pain. The urgency simply is not there for the government. As a result, more and more children are in school trying to learn when they don't have a stable home life because their parents are constantly on the move, because rent can't be made and they're being evicted from one place to the other. Children are not able to learn at school because they have to go to school ill-prepared because they don't have nutritious food in their stomach.

This is an absolute disgrace in a province like Ontario. It's an absolute disgrace that the government has not immediately put an end to the national child benefit clawback. It is a disgrace that this government still to this day continues to claw back over \$1,000 from families in this province on an annual basis. How can they even look at themselves in the mirror when they know that by their inaction these families continue to suffer day after day and month after month in this province? It is absolutely unacceptable.

On the other side of the coin, we have many, many people who are going to work every single day, sometimes to two and three jobs, just to try to make ends meet on a minimum wage in this province that is absolutely embarrassing. People are working very, very hard, and after working a 40-hour workweek they are coming home

with a pay packet that does not even get them to the poverty level in the province of Ontario. That is absolutely disgusting. That is absolutely unacceptable. And once again, the Liberals feel the pain, feel the pain so much that they are saying to people, "You can wait"—not another year, not another two years, but even longer than that.

Guess what happens? After those years of waiting, you are still going to be well below the poverty line. Why? Because by then, inflation will have increased and the poverty line will have been raised, to probably make sure that any increase that the Liberals are promising is going to still keep you below the poverty line. That is unacceptable in a province like Ontario where there is so much wealth, where people on the other side of the tracks, if you will, people in some environs, are making money hand over fist.

It has been a couple of years now that the economy has been strong. Granted, the most recent job losses over the last couple of years have created great concern, and there's no doubt that we are really worried about where the economy is going to go. But we've just wasted four years of Liberal government where people were not able to begin to climb out of the poverty trap, and I say, "Shame on this government."

I look in my community and I see every day people who are struggling. I see a government that got re-elected over a silly discussion that they liked to keep pulling people back to, when everyone knew that the discussion was a red herring and that the discussion should have been about something different. It should have been about the extent to which we could have an education system that is properly funded in this province.

Instead of dealing with that issue in an appropriate way, the government used it to refocus and reframe the campaign so they didn't have to talk about the issue of poverty in our communities. They didn't have to talk about the fact that thousands upon thousands upon thousands of manufacturing jobs were walking out of this province. They didn't have to talk about the fact that the minimum wage is at a level that ensures, that guarantees that people, no matter how hard they work, are going to remain living in poverty in this province.

I would say it's a sad commentary on this government that not only did they not deal with any of these issues over the last four years, but then they turned around and brought forward a throne speech that reinforced their lack of commitment to these kinds of issues, that reinforced their history as leaders in this Legislature who don't care about the very basic issues that families run up against day in, day out in cities and communities across this province. At the end of the day there is going to be a significant repercussion, maybe not to your electoral fortunes, but certainly if you take a look off of your pedestal to the communities that are you supposed to be representing, you have to acknowledge that the repercussions are there already and they are getting worse and worse.

I'm going to turn the floor over now to my leader, who is going to be speaking in a minute or two in regard to the

throne speech, but I have to say that there were real opportunities for the government to say, "We've acknowledged that these issues are out there, and we're prepared to do this, this and this to start tackling those issues right away." But no, they decided that they were going to bring a throne speech together that's a how-low-can-you-go kind of throne speech, a throne speech that reduces, once again, people's expectations. Granted, they raised expectations to enormous levels during the last campaign back in 2003 and then spent four years dashing people's expectations, dashing people's hopes and breaking promise after promise, so maybe they learned a little bit. But the reality is that what they needed to learn, they didn't learn, which is that you have to take care of the people of this province. That's what your job is.

1540

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Children's aid.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Whether it's a matter of making sure we have the kinds of programs we need and that we should have—and my friend mentioned to me just in passing here the issue of child care, and here we are again.

The \$300 million that the McGuinty Liberal government promised last time around never showed up. We now have massive expansion in child care in the for-profit sector, and we know that all the research and studies show that that is not the way to go. In fact, the quality of child care is less in the for-profit sector than it is in the not-for-profit sector. Yet, that's where the expansion is happening—not that there is much expansion at all. The unfortunate reality is that the people of this province still don't see a child care system, an early learning and care system, that really and truly does developmental work with children at a young age to prepare them to succeed and to excel in this province. Yet, the rhetoric the government brings is rhetoric around the transformation of the economy. So when it comes to preparing young children to be able to take advantage of education at the very earliest age, which is what we know needs to happen to be able to take advantage of this new economy, they're not prepared to do that. But when it comes to trying to justify why they're doing nothing about job loss, on the other hand, there they go. They say, "The job loss is just a result of the transformation of the economy."

Well, you can't have it both ways. You have to start somewhere. Unfortunately, this government is going nowhere and they're going fast, and unfortunately they're dragging the rest of us with them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair recognizes the leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for filling in for me. The schedule of this place does not always accommodate being in two places at one time, so I want to thank her very much.

I have a few comments I want to make about what I thought was a thoroughly underwhelming throne speech. I want to comment on a couple of areas in particular.

First of all I want to comment on what the government had to say about working with First Nations and relations with First Nations, and then this government's sorry record.

There have been a number of Supreme Court of Canada decisions which have said that all governments—federal and provincial—have a constitutional responsibility to consult and accommodate the rights and interests of First Nations when those governments plan to implement legislation, pass legislation or have a certain pathway of government action—a number of constitutional decisions going back now over the last eight years. They have all said the same thing. So the government spent at least a page of the throne speech saying that it wants to forge a new relationship with First Nations in Ontario. But what's happened over the last four years? Over the last four years, this government has breached its constitutional obligations and responsibilities to First Nations in Ontario not once, not twice, but repeatedly. This is a government that, under the Mining Act, has granted mining exploration permits, without any consultation with First Nations, for companies to explore for minerals in the traditional territory of First Nations, areas where there's hardly a non-native person visiting, never mind living there. It has done it all without any consultation or accommodation of First Nations.

Case in point: a case that has resulted in literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in legal costs and the forced deprivation of a First Nation. When you read the judgment of the judge who heard the case—I'm talking about the *Platinex* case—the trial judge said that the First Nation has done nothing wrong here; they're merely trying to defend their constitutional rights and their treaty rights. The mining exploration company hasn't done anything wrong; they're simply relying on a permit that has been given to them by the McGuinty government. But as he points out in his judgment, it's the McGuinty government that has been missing in action, that failed to consult, failed to accommodate, and this has now resulted in a court case where the mining company is trying to sue a First Nation for \$11 billion. The First Nation is having to take money out of its housing allowance, its education allowance and its health care allowance merely because they have to go to court to defend themselves.

I think any reasonable person would say that the government's words, as used in their throne speech, bear no relationship to the government's conduct, that the flowery words used in the throne speech are completely at odds with this government's repeated breach of its constitutional obligations and responsibilities with respect to First Nations in Ontario.

I hearken back to the words of Ontario's Ombudsman, who in his annual report last spring said of the McGuinty government, "This is a government that consistently over-promises and under-delivers." The throne speech is full of all of the flowery words, but if you actually look at the conduct of this government over the last four years with respect to First Nations in this province, it is something that this province should be ashamed of.

But I was reminded of something else. The new Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is not a completely new minister. He is also, at the same time, the former minister responsible for aboriginal affairs. You change the name and say, "Oh, we've made a giant step forward." But as the minister responsible for native affairs three years ago, I remember him standing in this House saying with great flourish and much chest-beating that the McGuinty government was committed to forging a new relationship with First Nations. That was three years ago—almost the same words used in the throne speech. What happened? After much chest-beating and self-congratulation for that speech, the government went ahead and failed to meet its constitutional and legal obligations to First Nations.

My advice to First Nations is to read the old speech, read the new speech, look at what happened in between and be very careful. This is a government that consistently over-promises and under-delivers.

I was also struck because, reading the throne speech, the government now says it's going to close coal-fired generating stations.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Again.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again. I went back and I read the 2003 throne speech. It said that coal-fired generating stations were all going to be closed by 2007. What have we got—about 27 days left in 2007? There's something a little out of balance here.

But I was not to be defeated just by reading the 2003 throne speech. I went back and read the 2005 throne speech, and it said, "Well, they're not going to be closed in 2007; the coal-fired generating stations are going to be closed in 2009." It must be that either the government can't get its dates right—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Or they're into recycling.

Mr. Howard Hampton: —or they're into recycling of promises in a big way, because in the 2003 throne speech, it said "closed by 2007"; in the 2005 throne speech, it said "closed by 2009." Imagine my surprise when I read in the 2007 throne speech, "Oh yes, they're going to close."

Mr. John Yakabuski: No date.

Mr. Howard Hampton: No, no; it was 2007, then 2009, and now it's 2014. If you repeat something often enough, hopefully people might swallow it. But I think what people are having difficulty swallowing is that the time out there is getting longer—much longer.

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I want to say to people at home that the McGuinty government is trying to say to you that you have to build nuclear plants to close the coal plants. Well, there's just one detail, but it's an important detail. The fact is that even if the government said today, "We're going to build new nuclear capacity," it would take until at least 2016-17 to build new nuclear capacity in this province. It's tremendously complicated financially, there are some environmental issues, there are some regulatory issues and it is tremendously complicated in terms of the engineering and construction.

The government says the coal plants are going to close in 2014, but the nuclear capacity capable of replacing coal won't be there until 2016-17 and, I'd even bet, 2018. So, I would say to folks at home that they'd better be careful about that 2014 promise too, as mentioned in this throne speech, because it doesn't have any more credibility than the 2007 promise or the 2009 promise.

The fact of the matter is that if the McGuinty government is to have any hope of closing coal-fired generating stations by 2014, there is only one way to get there, and that is to adopt the program that has been adopted in jurisdictions like California, Manitoba and the New England states: implement an aggressive, thorough, energy efficiency energy conservation strategy, some aimed at the residential sector—yes, very much aimed at the residential sector—some aimed at the institutional sector, the commercial sector and the manufacturing sector. Do we see any of those things in Ontario? No.

If you live in Manitoba today, you could get a \$5,000 low-interest loan that you could use to retrofit your home—put in high-efficiency natural gas heating, put in energy-efficient appliances, doors, windows, insulation—to substantially reduce your energy consumption. What you save on your monthly hydro bill, and then save on your monthly natural gas bill, goes toward payback of the loan. You don't even notice. No payments come out of your own pocket. It's simply what you save by reducing your energy consumption going toward paying the loan.

Do we have that in Ontario? No. I've seen lots of ads on television. I've seen lots of public relations campaigns under the McGuinty government over the last four years. But that program does not exist in Ontario.

In the New England states, on those very hot summer days, there is an incentive strategy for major users of electricity to reduce their consumption and actually get paid for doing that. This is one of the ways the New England states manage their peak electricity usage. It works very well. It's a demand-reduction strategy that has been used in New England for a significant number of years, and it's very successful.

California has reduced its electricity consumption by 12,000 megawatts over what it otherwise would have been. What is 12,000 megawatts? It's the equivalent of three Darlington-sized nuclear stations. What did Darlington cost to build? Almost \$15 billion. So we're talking about the possibility of forgoing something in the range of \$45 billion of nuclear construction, which is exactly where the McGuinty government is headed—a \$40-billion nuclear megascheme.

How has California done it? Not by inventing some magical new technology. They have the most stringent regulations in terms of requiring energy-efficient appliances. You cannot sell a stove, fridge, air conditioner or television in California unless it meets the most strict energy efficiency requirements, and by doing that, they have significantly reduced the amount of electricity being used in residences.

The California building code, which is already in place, not only for residences but for multi-residential

units like apartment buildings, institutions, hospitals, schools, community centres, swimming pools and hockey rinks, requires that buildings be built according to the strictest energy efficiency standards.

So it's not about inventing some magical new technology; it's about making available, first of all, the financial substance so that individuals, communities and institutions can make the energy efficiency investments and then get the money back through reduced energy use. It's about requiring the use of the most energy-efficient appliances and it's about having a housing building code that requires people to meet those standards. Then things start to happen.

I met with the director of energy efficiency from California, who said, "There's no secret to this. You have to show people that within five years they'll get their money back. If you stretch it out longer than five years and people can't see themselves getting the money back that's required to make the energy efficiency investment, they won't do it. But as long as you show that they're going to get their money back within five years, people will willingly sign up because they can see a time horizon within which this makes financial sense."

Do we see any of this from the McGuinty government? None. None whatsoever. At the end of the day, when you strip through the superficial advertising campaign, the energy strategy of the McGuinty government is simple: "Go nuclear and go big. Go nuclear and go very big. Go nuclear and go very expensive." That is going to be a very big pill for manufacturers, employers and ordinary consumers in this province to swallow.

I suggest that we'll have more opportunity to revisit this issue again and again as how misguided it really is becomes more publicly evident.

I also want to address the issue of jobs because there's an urgency of jobs—a real urgency. Virtually every day, another paper mill, pulp mill, sawmill, another auto assembly plant, another auto parts plant, another steel plant shuts down in this province. We are very soon going to be at the point where 200,000 good manufacturing jobs will have been lost.

The McGuinty government wants to pretend that getting a job with a temp agency is somehow going to replace these good manufacturing jobs. They want to pretend that somehow getting hired on by Wal-Mart is going to replace these good manufacturing jobs. They want to pretend that McDonald's is the answer to the loss of these good manufacturing jobs.

I invite them: Go to Windsor and make that argument today. Go to Thunder Bay and make that argument.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Go to Hamilton.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Go to Hamilton and make that argument. Go to Oshawa and make that argument.

The McGuinty government is oh, so pleased that they didn't have to address any of these issues in a meaningful way during the election campaign. They were oh, so happy that they could just skip by those issues. But let me tell you: In the weeks and months ahead, the McGuinty government is not going to be able to skip by

these issues because they are becoming so large and the economic repercussions of them for the rest of the economy are becoming so substantial that the McGuinty government is going to be forced to address these issues in some manner.

If the McGuinty government thinks that holding a photo op on trans fats one day and holding another photo op in terms of military personnel the next day is somehow going to gloss over and allow it to escape these issues—that strategy might see them through until Christmas, but in the new year it is simply not going to pass muster in any way, shape or form.

I looked at the throne speech and I was trying to find some urgency on the part of the government, some urgency to take on and address this issue. I've listened over the last couple of days as I've tried to ask the Premier about this. The Premier's response seems to be that he believes in global corporations, and whatever global corporations want to do in the form of the global economy, that's fine with him. Well, other jurisdictions don't see it that way.

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I asked the Premier about his conversation with the Premier of Quebec. Quebec is actually putting in place a strategy to try, as best they can, to sustain and maintain and reposition manufacturing jobs in that province. One thing they've done is they have an industrial hydro rate that allows manufacturers to continue to function in that province. In fact—I'm sure that many people, especially across northern Ontario, know this—as paper mills have shut down in northern Ontario, paper mill after paper mill has transferred production and jobs to Quebec. When Abitibi made the decision to close the paper mill in Kenora and put over 400 people out of work, they announced that production would be moving to a mill in Quebec. When Cascades shut down their paper mill in Thunder Bay and put 400 people out of work, they announced that production would be moving to Quebec and the jobs would be moving to Quebec. When Abitibi closed their Abitibi Mission mill in Thunder Bay, they announced that production and jobs would be moving to Quebec. When Inco made the decision a year and a half ago to shut down the copper refinery in Sudbury, when you asked—you didn't have to dig very deep before they simply said, "Look, it's cheaper for us to send our copper to a smelter in Montreal and have it processed there than it is to reinvest in the smelter in Sudbury and pay much higher electricity rates." That is going to continue to happen. We're now starting to see it in the auto parts sector. Any auto parts that are involved in casting, stamping or plastics moulding are looking at moving production out of Ontario, simply because they recognize that their cost structure in a province like Quebec or a province like Manitoba is much lower. Hydro rates are a big part of that.

I heard the Premier the other day say, "Oh, you know, we can't do anything about industrial hydro rates." I invite the Premier to look at Germany. Germany leads the world in terms of investment in wind power and in

terms of investment in solar power. They lead the world in terms of some of the things they're doing to reduce their energy consumption. They know that these things are not cheap. Investing in solar power and investing in wind power is not cheap. They have simply made the social and political decision that they want, notwithstanding their investments in expensive wind power and expensive solar power, to continue to maintain manufacturing jobs in Germany.

While the residential cost of electricity may be 11 or 12 cents a kilowatt hour and going higher, the steel industry in Germany has an industrial hydro rate of 5.5 cents a kilowatt hour. Why? Because they recognize that the steel industry in that jurisdiction is the foundation of their auto industry, it's the foundation of their shipbuilding industry and of much of their heavy manufacturing, and it's, in many ways, also the foundation of their engineering industry. I invite members: Look at many of the machine parts or the machinery equipment that is produced in the world today: Much of it comes from Germany. Every time there is a new-technology strand board mill built in Ontario, if you look at where the presses come—and the presses are worth hundreds of millions of dollars—they're manufactured in Germany. Germany has made the decision that they're going to be in the forefront of promoting wind power, they're going to be in the forefront of promoting solar power and they're going to be in the forefront of reducing energy consumption in their jurisdiction, but they've also made the decision that they're going to have an industrial hydro rate which will support jobs.

I say to this government: When you have paper mills shutting down, when you have steel mills shutting down and you can walk down Yonge Street and see major retailers with the air conditioning cranked right up and the doors open, blowing air-conditioned air out the door, there's something wrong with the electricity strategy. You should not have people losing their jobs and at the same time see major retailers like the Gap on a hot summer day with the doors open and the air conditioning cranked right up. You should not have that kind of situation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What were you doing at the Gap?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't go to the Gap, but I can tell you that the person who did the survey does.

So I looked in this throne speech for a sense of urgency in terms of dealing with these issues. What did I find? I found more platitudes. I found, as the Ombudsman said, a government that over-promises and under-delivers. I found no strategy, no urgency, no direction. In fact, basically what this government is saying after the loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs is that it now wants to appoint one of its members to study the problem. Who did they appoint to study the problem? The former Minister of Natural Resources, who presided over the destruction of 45,000 jobs in the forest sector. Let me tell you, for those people who are in the steel sector, the auto sector and the manufacturing sector generally, this is

not good news, to have somebody who presided over the destruction of 45,000 good jobs in northern Ontario now advising the government on what to do about the threat to manufacturing jobs generally. This is not a good start.

But that was the only plan of action that I saw in this throne speech. As worker after worker after worker, family after family after family, community after community after community are being devastated with the loss of manufacturing jobs, the response of the McGuinty government is that they're going to have a minister who wasn't very good in his job study the issue. This is not a plan of action. It certainly doesn't express any sense of urgency.

There are a number of other issues that also caught my eye, and I can't mention them all here, but I know that other members of our caucus are going to raise them in the days and weeks ahead. But I did want to make note of this: The McGuinty government spent a fair bit of time in the throne speech talking about poverty. Let me tell you, with the loss of 200,000 good manufacturing jobs, with the cost of living, hydro rates, natural gas rates, transit rates, property taxes, all these things escalating significantly, poverty has become a big problem. In fact, under the McGuinty government in the first four years, Ontario has become the child poverty capital of Canada—not Newfoundland any more, not New Brunswick any more, not Quebec; Ontario has become the child poverty capital in Canada.

The government pats itself on the back and beats itself on the chest, talks a good game on poverty, but I was looking for a strategy, an action plan. Once again, do you know what the action plan is? Well, the action plan is that the government's going to have a cabinet committee to study the issue, and a year from now one of the things they're going to study is, "What is poverty?" Children who wake up hungry, who go to school hungry and who come home hungry can tell you what poverty is about.

We've had postcard after postcard, placard after placard delivered in this Legislature from kids who tell you what poverty's like. When other kids laugh at you when you go to school because your shirt and your shoes are worn and have holes in them, when other kids make fun of you when you go to school because they know you don't have the money to participate, whether it's a hot dog day or a pizza day, when kids get up in the morning hungry, go to school hungry and go to bed hungry, those are clear indications of poverty. We have organizations across Canada that have indicia of what poverty is. They can even tell you what the poverty level is in a large city, a medium-sized city, what it is in a small town and what it is in a rural area, based upon differentials and costs—the cost of rent in a city versus the cost of transportation in a rural area. If anything, I think poverty has been studied to no end, yet the plan of the McGuinty government is to study the issue, and then in 2008—and be wary; this reminds me of the promises about the coal plants—they intend to set some targets.

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There are some things the McGuinty government could do today if it really cared about poverty. Let me

give you an example of one. Many years ago the federal government realized that there was a problem of too many children growing up impoverished, so they created the national child benefit and the national child benefit supplement. They actually send out a cheque to those lowest-income kids so that those kids won't go to bed hungry and won't go to school hungry. But what does the McGuinty government do? What have they been doing for the last four years? They've been clawing back that money from those lowest-income kids in Ontario, those very kids who go to bed hungry and go to school hungry, those very kids who know what it's like to be laughed at because they go to school with holes in their clothing and other kids pick on them. The McGuinty government has been clawing back money from those very low-income kids for the last four years. And tomorrow the McGuinty government is going to continue to claw back money from those lowest-income kids, and next year the McGuinty government is going to continue to claw back money from those lowest-income kids, and two years from now, and three years from now.

If the McGuinty government had any sincerity at all, any integrity at all, about addressing the issue of poverty, they would stop clawing back the money from those lowest-income kids today. Yet they're going to get a cabinet committee to study the issue, and after the cabinet committee has studied the issue, they're going to set some targets. They're not even going to set targets this year. In 2008, they're going to set targets for out-years.

There's something else this government could do if it was really serious about addressing poverty. We know you can go out and work for the minimum wage in Ontario and you still fall below the poverty line. You can work more than full-time, more than 40 hours a week, for the minimum wage in Ontario and still fall below the poverty line. It's been demonstrated in study after study after study after study, yet the McGuinty government wants to continue to study the issue. There's no secret here. Other jurisdictions have done this. The state of Washington has done it; the state of Oregon has done it; Ireland has done it; Great Britain has done it. They substantially increased their minimum wage and then they did the studies, after they had increased the minimum wage. And do you know what the studies show, almost universally? That raising the minimum wage makes a significant difference for low-income workers, that the people who will benefit the most from a significant increase in the minimum wage are low-income workers.

But do you know what they also show? The people who benefit second-most from an increase in the minimum wage are local small businesses. Why? Because when low-paid workers get an increase in the minimum wage, they don't spend it on a holiday in the Caribbean, they don't buy an expensive foreign car, and they don't put it in an offshore mutual fund. They don't have any of those things. They spend virtually all of their additional income in the local community, on things like clothing

for their kids or food or paying the rent or other necessities. And who gets the money very quickly? The local small business community gets that money very, very quickly. If the McGuinty government were really serious about addressing poverty, they would raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour now, when it would make a difference, not three years from now, when people will be further behind.

I simply want to raise one other point. There are all kinds of issues on which I disagree with the current federal government, but one of the things they've done is actually given the McGuinty government some money for affordable housing. In fact, over the last three years they have given the McGuinty government significant sums of money for affordable housing.

There's a crying need for affordable housing. In Toronto alone, there are tens of thousands of families on a waiting list for affordable housing. It's the same situation in Hamilton and the same situation in places like Oshawa or Ottawa: a waiting list for affordable housing. Has the McGuinty government used that federal money that was given to them by the federal government for affordable housing? Have they used it for that purpose? No. In fact, when you sit down and look at the numbers, there are only about 300 units—

Mr. Michael Prue: Two hundred and eighty-five.

Mr. Howard Hampton: —285 units of housing that have been built that are truly affordable for low-income people. This cannot be. This government should not be sitting on money given to it by the federal government for affordable housing. And yet, the net result in terms of housing that is affordable for low-income people is a grand total of 285 units under the McGuinty government. That is the reality.

If this government was really serious about doing something about poverty, they would have taken the money that's been made available to them by the federal government and invested it already in truly affordable housing for low-income families. But I regret, when I read the throne speech—did I see a plan? Did I see a commitment? Did I see a strategy? No; nothing, just a cabinet committee that's going to study the issue.

I am reminded once again of what the Ombudsman said in his annual report last year, that this is a government that persistently overpromises and underdelivers. And when I read the throne speech, in my attempt to find if there was something which was going to change, if there was some new revelation, I regret to say that I saw more of the same: no urgency in terms of manufacturing jobs, no recognition that this government has been in breach of its constitutional and legal obligations to First Nations, no strategy to deal with the issue of poverty, no plan other than go nuclear, go big for energy in this province.

I say to people across this province that, regrettably, I don't see much that is new, much that is different or much that is inspiring in this throne speech. Regrettably, it is more of the same, but at the same time that we see more of the same, the issues grow more severe.

The challenge of job loss is more difficult to address, and it's going to become much more difficult to address in the weeks and months ahead. Poverty with that kind of job loss is going to grow. The need for a thoughtful resolution of Ontario's energy problems and the need to recognize that there has to be some affordability of energy for industry continues to grow as a problem.

I was hoping that there was going to be a plan, a strategy, an urgency, a direction, a path that was going to be identified in this throne speech. It hasn't happened. So our job over the weeks and months ahead will be to hold a government that seems to like photo ops, that seems to like superficial photo ops more than ever, to account, and to demand a higher standard than they have delivered at any point in the past and have any evidence of delivering on in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

1620

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: First of all, let me congratulate all the re-elected members and the new members in this great place, in the Legislature, for another term. I'm delighted to be here. Before I get rolling, I want to introduce a couple of my staff, Darlene Warner and Jenn Carreira, who are here watching these proceedings today.

Just before talking about the throne speech, I want to address a couple of comments I heard from my colleagues from Hamilton Centre and Kenora—Rainy River about their surprise about the throne speech, the lack of whatever content—they were expecting something different. What I don't understand is: It was our platform. People voted for the platform. So if they're really surprised, then I would say that they weren't really paying much attention. But anyway, I'm going to leave that for another day to debate, and I look forward to debating in this House as we move forward.

I just want to take the opportunity to thank all the people in Northumberland—Quinte West who came out on October 10 and supported me personally, plus this government, with another majority. It was a great campaign, the highest margin our riding has ever had. We had a great team. Obviously, the people who came out to vote liked the changes that we embarked on in 2003 and some of the changes, after we got elected in 2003, reflected on the ground. I'm going to talk about some of the things we were able to do as a government over the past four years. Really, it is building the foundation as we move forward for the next four years. We certainly learned certain things to move forward.

For example, we had a couple of hospitals in the riding—well, one specifically. Actually, it's in the Minister of Agriculture's riding, but it services my riding as well, the Belleville General Hospital. It was delivered three rubber cheques for reconstruction.

Hon. John Wilkinson: The Tories' IOUs.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Well, I'm not sure they were IOUs. But I tell you, the building is going up.

They also got a much-anticipated MRI machine, which they're going to put in their brand new hospital, the addition.

On December 22 last year, I was able to announce in Cobourg, for the new Northumberland hospital, an MRI machine they never had. Today, I had the opportunity to cut a shiny red ribbon. It's working less than a year after we announced it. The people in the riding of Northumberland recognize that.

In the riding in general, under our Best Start program, we had 199 new daycare spaces. Do you know what? They're all funded by the province—no municipal participation.

I'm going to talk about some of the individual municipalities. I have only 10 minutes; I thought I had 10 hours. But anyway, I will try to make it through this because my good friend from Ottawa Centre, whom I'm going to share my time with, is going to speak after me. I should have said that at the beginning—a new member and a great member.

In the municipality of Brighton, which happens to be my home, the very first family health team was opened. Do you know what? In just a little bit over two years in operation, about 4,000 fewer are orphan patients in that community. We invested over \$2 million for refurbishing a building to house a new OPP station, right in the community, that serves east Northumberland.

I'm just going to touch on a couple of things we did in each municipality. Just east of Brighton is the municipality of Quinte West, home of CFB Trenton, one of the largest air bases in Canada. We're honoured to have that. They're a great employer. With the announcement we made just this week to support the families of military folks, it's very well received. Why other governments in the past never thought of that, I don't know, but I'm delighted we're able to do that for those families in much need.

At the Trenton Memorial hospital, about a year and a half ago we delivered a CT scanner. They never had one before. It's fine that they have a CT scanner, but here's one of the things the radiologist told me that day when we cut the ribbon, a red ribbon: Having that CT scanner at the memorial hospital saves about a thousand ambulance trips for patients to go from that hospital to another hospital—a thousand ambulance trips a year. That's three a day.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You should know that—my good friend Mr. Wilkinson's father is Rotary International president.

Mr. Speaker, those are a couple of things in the east end of my riding.

Interjection: We want to hear about Brighton.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You missed that. I did it already.

Let me talk about the investments we made in Port Hope. That other government—I won't even mention their name—closed the hospital there. They lost their hospital. Those folks in Port Hope were devastated—devastated. They closed the hospital. What did we do? Within a year or a year and a half of forming government, our Minister of Health, Minister Smitherman, delivered a brand new community health centre, fully

funded by this province, including capital funding of close to \$3 million, and we're going to pay ongoing operational expenses of somewhere between \$1.5 million and \$2.5 million a year. Yes, they did not get another hospital, but they got a community health centre.

Under that government, schools in the community of Port Hope were falling apart. We had Howard Jordan Public School full of mould. We had to close part of it. Do you know what we're doing? We're building a brand new school—brand new. That school was so bad that you could not repair it anymore.

I'm delighted with the investments we've been able to make in our community, and I know that the people of Northumberland—Quinte West are going to look on this newly elected government, in their second mandate, to keep on the track we've embarked on.

Let me talk about Cobourg, one of the most beautiful beaches on the north shore of Lake Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: The Sunshine Coast.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're right. It is the Sunshine Coast. Victoria Park—just in the last year, this government helped the local community on the multi-million dollar revitalization of their waterfront. The folks in Cobourg were delighted that we helped them achieve their goal of rebuilding their waterfront. There's a beach right in downtown Cobourg.

Mr. Mike Colle: The yacht club.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The best yacht club between Toronto and Kingston. I'm going to use an expression that the warden normally uses: "We're the centre of the universe."

I don't want to offend anybody else in this House, but we are. Don't feel bad. I do like Scarborough and east Toronto when I drive by. But, I tell you, Northumberland is a hidden treasure. Along the corridor, we've got water, we've got rail and we've got the 401.

We have very, very vibrant tourism activities with Presqu'île Park in Brighton. In Quinte West, we have the mouth of the Trent Canal, the gateway to the canal system; and in Port Hope—I cannot emphasize the history enough—the downtown with its unique boutiques is truly a treasure.

I was delighted to be re-elected to keep my communities vibrant, and I know we're going to do that. At this time, I'm going to turn this over to my good friend from Ottawa Centre.

1630

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is a privilege to rise today to speak to the speech from the throne. I would like to take this occasion to highlight two big reasons I am present in this House as MPP for Ottawa Centre.

First, I would like to acknowledge the wisdom, courage and sacrifice of my parents, Anwar and Qaisar Naqvi, who are with us today in the members' gallery. Like many parents, they sought the best for their children: to grow and live in a safe and prosperous environment. But most importantly, they instilled in me the value of public service.

In particular, I want to thank my father for the sacrifices he made in the pursuit of democracy in his native country. I'm not sure if, while languishing in prison for nine months as a political prisoner, he envisioned that one day his son would be a legislator in the best province of this great country. Sir, you inspired me, and I salute and thank you for your wisdom and courage.

I would also like to acknowledge the people of Ottawa Centre, my community where I live, work and volunteer. It is because of their trust in me and in this government that I am here today, and I thank them for it. I'm humbled by the tremendous opportunity to advocate for their ideas, hopes and dreams at Queen's Park.

Ottawa is one of Canada's fastest growing cities, and Ottawa Centre is its heart, a diverse riding with diverse needs. Walk through its neighbourhoods, from the Arts Court near Parkdale Market to Bank Street, from Westboro to the Glebe, and will you learn that more people rent their homes than own them; safe streets are not a reality for everyone; our neighbours are mainly first- and second-generation Canadians; we primarily walk, bike or use public transit rather than own a car; and we appreciate the green spaces and walking trails that link our neighbourhoods together. So I will work for more affordable housing and the defence of tenants' rights, for more assistance and support of our police services, for more opportunities for new Canadians who come to our province, and for a greener community.

In this riding, where over 60 languages are spoken, one voice is loud and clear: It calls for respect, hope and inclusiveness. It is a voice that asks us to lift people up, not weigh them down; to find solutions, not harp on problems; to build bridges, not walls; and to defend public health care, public transportation and public education.

During the campaign and over the past four years, Premier McGuinty and his team worked hard to earn the support of Ottawa residents by investing almost \$620 million into our eastern Ontario schools, including hiring over 400 new teachers in Ottawa; investing over \$500 million on hospital capital projects in the Ottawa area, including hiring 116 new full-time nurses; and investing over \$82 million for transit-related infrastructure in the Ottawa area. I will continue to ensure progress in these areas for the people of Ottawa Centre.

I will work with the McGuinty government by continuing to improve the education funding formula by investing an additional \$3.1 billion annually in education by 2011 and requiring that the formula be reviewed by 2010; further reducing wait times for emergency room visits, children's surgery and general surgery, all the while hiring 9,000 new nurses and ensuring access to a family doctor for 500,000 more Ontarians; and working with our federal and municipal partners towards the creation of an effective transit system in Ottawa.

I am pleased to be a part of our government's green initiatives, including Move Ontario 2020. I'm proud Ontarians are leading the way in turning environmental

threats into opportunities to create the next generation of green technology.

I'm most excited about our government's commitment to poverty reduction with a strategy that includes fully implementing the Ontario child benefit and providing more affordable housing.

I would be remiss if I did not remind members of this honourable chamber that none of this can be accomplished without a strong and prosperous economy. That is why our government will continue to strengthen the economy by keeping taxes competitive, at the same time as we work with business and labour to create good, high-paying jobs. Through initiatives such as the next generation jobs fund, our government will support innovation and jobs of the future, and through the new \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, communities become better when we work together. They become more livable, greener, safer, more tolerant and prosperous—in a word, sustainable. Members on all sides of this Legislature share the belief that communities become stronger when we seek collective solutions. I look forward to collaborating with all members to achieve great accomplishments for our neighbours, our communities and our province.

As I sat here listening to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor last week, I felt moments of awe, pride and weightiness at the challenge that lies before us all. I'm in awe of the tradition that surrounds us, years of rules and customs which make our democracy a strong one. I am proud of the province and country we live in. I am challenged by the enormous responsibility of public service. However, it is a challenge I'm pleased to take up, as I believe the best days of our country, our province and Ottawa are ahead of us, not behind us.

During my term in office, I will seek solutions for problems that span jurisdictions, working with Ottawa city councillors, my federal counterpart, as well as community associations, business groups, multicultural societies and other volunteer organizations in Ottawa Centre. I believe in the power of collaborative action. Throughout my term as an MPP, I promise to work hard and tirelessly to serve the people of Ottawa Centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jim Watson: Just a quick word of congratulations to my new colleague and my neighbour, the honourable member from Ottawa Centre. You can tell by his passion and dedication that he is going to be a great member of provincial Parliament and parliamentary assistant. I wish him the very best over the next four years.

The member from Ottawa Centre joins a great group of men and women who, along with the Premier, are part of the eastern Ontario Liberal caucus. We're very proud of the accomplishments we have made in Ottawa and eastern Ontario. I just wanted to highlight a couple of those that are highlighted in general terms in the speech

from the throne, specifically in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean.

I'm very pleased that next month we're going to be opening three new operating rooms at the Queensway Carleton Hospital to shorten wait times. The cancer centre is expanding, and they're going to be putting in a satellite operation at the Queensway Carleton Hospital as well as at the main centre at the Ottawa general hospital. This is a substantial investment in eastern Ontario to reduce wait times for chemotherapy and radiation treatments.

Highway 417, which serves all parts of eastern Ontario, is being expanded in the west end. For the first time in eastern Ontario, high-occupancy vehicle lanes are going to be included to encourage people to carpool, from an environmental point of view.

The money that we have contributed to the city of Ottawa has been significant and substantial. In just last year's budget, \$60 million went to the city of Ottawa. We're putting more money in transit through the gas tax. We're investing in social housing. I was pleased to be with Lynn Carson and others at Nepean Housing, where we opened new housing units behind Ben Franklin Place at CentrepoinTE.

It's a record we can all be proud of. We want to do more and we will do more for eastern Ontario in the years ahead.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to join the comments with respect to the statements made by the member from Northumberland-Quinte West as well as the member from Ottawa Centre. Congratulations, both of you, on your election as well as on your sincerity in your remarks and your commitment to work with your constituents.

What's most disappointing, however, is the fact that if you listened to the throne speech, there were a lot of things missing, a lot of things that were outlined during the election but somehow escaped the notice of the composers of the speech from the throne.

The current talk about hospitals is a good place to start. We had questions in the House today on the issues around Brampton Civic Hospital. We had questions today on the Sarnia hospital and, more importantly, in my riding of Durham, the unresolved issue of the ongoing deficit at Lakeridge Health. The GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance, clearly an independent, arm's-length agency, has stated there is over \$250 per person less for the people who live in that part of the province of Ontario. It's simply unfair. Nothing that I've heard in the throne speech or from the Minister of Health will address that.

Even more locally, in the community of Uxbridge, with the Uxbridge Cottage Hospital, it's well known by the minister from my remarks with him and those of the previous member who represented that area that there is the real serious situation of a doctor shortage: no anaesthesiologist, not the minimums they need to operate an effective hospital and primary care. They need an alternative payment plan to deal with the emergency room situation.

1640

There are a lot of things missing from the throne speech, and certainly I'm looking forward to the member from our caucus, Mr. Yakabuski's, remarks to bring some clarity to what's missing. It's fine to talk all the time about the promises made. I'm more interested, really, in the promises that are kept, and that's what we should keep our eye on: Don't make promises you don't intend to keep.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member from southwest—Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I love the southwest; it's nice and warm.

Anyway, I want to take this opportunity as well to congratulate both speakers today, the member from Northumberland-Quinte West and the member from Ottawa Centre, who made his first remarks today. They were excellent and well taken to heart. I think both were striving towards the same point in their comments, and that is that this throne speech is about hope: hope for all people of Ontario, hope for the future and hope for a better Ontario for all of us. We heard from both speakers about how they came, and in particular the member from Ottawa Centre, how he came from a different country and his father had to go through various experiences and now there are opportunities here which were not available elsewhere.

I think it's exceptional that here in this throne speech we're going to continue on a platform that we started four years ago towards a better education system, towards a better health care system, towards improving the quality of our water and our environment and continuing to focus on the things that are important to all people here in Ontario: to continue to provide job opportunities for people here, to continue to help those who are most vulnerable in our society, the seniors in our society, and to provide them with things that they need, the health care and the services that they need and the tax breaks that they need.

This throne speech and the comments made today by both members encompassed those particular areas. We want a more prosperous Ontario, we want to see prosperity and help for all and, above all, we want to see hope for all. The comments by both members today, I think, clearly indicated that we are moving in the right direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, on your assumption of the role of Deputy Speaker in this Legislature. I certainly look forward to working with you.

I want to respond briefly to the comments that were made by the members for Northumberland-Quinte West and Ottawa Centre. We heard from the member for Northumberland-Quinte West in the previous provincial Parliament, so this wasn't his maiden speech, but it was certainly an interesting offering to this House this

afternoon. Certainly, the member for Ottawa Centre should be congratulated on his election. His comments today in his maiden speech were made in a very sincere way and are, I know, ones that are endorsed by many members of this House.

For my part, I'm really looking forward to the comments by the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who is waiting in the wings for our party. He's going to be bringing forward some of the concerns he heard in his riding during the course of the election campaign. When I was canvassing in Wellington–Halton Hills during the election campaign, I heard a great deal of concern from people—huge numbers of concerns—with respect to the administration of the provincial government here for the last four years. I was very pleased to be returned by the people of Wellington–Halton Hills to represent them, but at the same time I recognize that the Liberal Party has been re-elected. We congratulate them on their re-election and we look forward to working with them, but we will be continuing to do our job in opposition, to ensure that they are honest with the people of Ontario, that we can hold their feet to the fire in terms of accountability in this Legislature.

My colleague the member for Durham has reminded me again of the need to encourage the government to do more to support municipalities with their infrastructure needs. In Wellington–Halton Hills there are a number of municipalities that have huge infrastructure issues that they are coming to me with, seeking my support to bring those concerns forward in the Ontario Legislature, to ask the provincial government to review them, assess them and hopefully to assist us with these infrastructure needs in our small communities in the riding of Wellington–Halton Hills. I look forward to doing that over the next four years and I look forward to, hopefully, a positive and appropriate response from the government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Ottawa Centre: two minutes to respond.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I would first like to thank members from Ottawa West–Nepean, Durham, Scarborough Southwest, and Wellington–Halton Hills for their comments.

In conclusion, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank the members of Ottawa Centre, the community groups I have worked with over the years, for giving me this opportunity to serve them here at Queen's Park and to work on the constituents' needs over the years. I look forward to the opportunity of working with all the members here in the chamber, and serving the province as a whole.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on the throne speech on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus.

First of all, I want to congratulate all 107 successful members on their election to the House here on October 10, and I want to pay particular attention to the 17 new members: 11 members of the government caucus, four

members of the Progressive Conservative caucus and two new members for the NDP. I want to congratulate each and every one of them. I know we share many of the same ideals as to why we come here and what we hope to accomplish while we are here.

Then, I want to thank the voters of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for re-electing me as their representative here. As you know, I was elected in 2003 in a riding that had been held by the other party with one of the smallest margins of victory in the province—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): You know, I have trouble hearing the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, because he speaks so softly, so I would appreciate your co-operation.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have heard that in the past, that you have trouble hearing me. Members on the opposite side said they have trouble listening to me.

Again, we had one of the smallest margins of victory in 2003, which left us a great deal of work to do in our riding and accomplish in the four years. I want to thank those people for honouring me with their support in 2007 and returning me to this Legislature. I continue to pledge to work on their behalf, as I have for the past four years.

The throne speech—you know, we hear these members of the government talk about their plans and their aspirations and what wonderful things are in store for Ontario. They're so proud and so anxious and so enthused about their plan that it took them until November 29 to deliver this throne speech. Why so long? You know, the people of Ontario, we're in a crisis in this province, and this government took until November 29 to deliver their throne speech.

I understand that in 2003, when there was a change of government and there was a new Premier, he had to bring in his wife to pick out the new drapes for the Premier's office and all of that kind of stuff. We understand that it took a little while to get down to brass tacks. But here in 2007, November 29, Thursday past, the throne speech is delivered and the House gets down to real business only this past Monday. If you're really anxious, proud and enthusiastic about what you've got to offer the province of Ontario, we should have been to work much sooner.

Interjection: Mike Harris was months coming back.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That election was in June. You might want to remember, member for Essex, that that election was in June, and there normally is a recess after that. Anyhow—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. Let's have some order. Member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Let's talk about the throne speech. Where do we want to start? Let's start with page 1, when they talk about supporting our military families. Let's talk about supporting our military families. They did bring in legislation, which was unanimously approved by all parties. What have they accomplished

with that? They've eliminated the waiting period for OHIP and they have assured the jobs of reservists when they're deployed. Most employers already honoured that convention.

1650

What this government has failed to do, and something that we've been pressing for since they introduced that health tax in 2005, is—okay, you want to talk about supporting people in our military, the brave men and women who defend our interests around the world? Why are you still charging those enlisted people the health tax? They do not get their health care from the provincial government. It is paid for entirely by the federal government. This is the only jurisdiction in Canada, of the jurisdictions that charge either a health care premium or a tax, that does not exempt members of the military or members of the RCMP. Why only in the province of Ontario do you continue to insult those in our military, the enlisted men and women, those brave people who defend us around the world? Why do you continue to insult them by charging that punitive tax? That is something you should have been addressing.

Let's talk about something else in the throne speech. The McGuinty government talks about a commitment to redevelop 35,000 long-term-care beds in the province of Ontario over the next 10 years. The member for Northumberland—Quinte West wanted to talk about the last four years. Well, for a moment I'll talk about the last four years. What did you do to redevelop B and C beds in this province in the last four years? Zippo. Nothing.

Hon. John Wilkinson: We had to get those D beds.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The D beds were redeveloped under the past government; 20,000 D beds were redeveloped under the past government. So now we have a commitment by this government to redevelop 35,000 B and C beds in the province of Ontario and not a word about the funding that's going to be required. What long-term care got out of this government in their first four years was less support than any government in this province's history. What they got was a cornucopia of all kinds of regulations without the money to support and allow them to implement them.

Interjection: Spell that for us.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I could, but I only have 20 minutes. Did you want it done phonetically as well?

So no support for long-term care and a vague commitment that they want to redevelop 35,000 beds across this province in the next 10 years: That's the kind of stuff that's in this throne speech, all kinds of fluffy stuff. Is somebody going to be opposed to that? Of course they're not going to be opposed to that. But has this government made the commitment to actually do the things that will make that possible, that will allow that to happen? No.

Then recently we have the reverend flap. Can I say "reverend" in here? Can I say "holy"? Can I say "God"? Apparently I can say any of those.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Peterborough is saying that they got that resolved. I sent the Minister of

Transportation a letter around a month ago on this subject. You'd have to believe that the McGuinty government sent some new marching orders down to the star chamber that any kind of a plate that has any kind of a religious or spiritual connotation on it: "Shut her down, Louis. No plate; can't approve it." That had to come from the Premier's office.

So now sane people across this province, reasonable people, are building all kinds of pressure and putting all kinds of pressure on the Premier, and the poor Minister of Transportation—in a way I feel a bit sorry for him because I know all the orders come out of the Premier's office. So I was feeling a little bit of sympathy for the Minister of Transportation, who was new in that portfolio—a man with a lot of experience in this House but new in that portfolio. He was getting all kinds of pressure from wise and reasonable people around this province, myself and Mr. O'Toole included. What was he going to do about this?

What could somebody find offensive about the letters R-E-V? Simply said, they say "REV"; it could stand for "revving," it could stand for "reverend," and they shut it down. One of the logics was, "Well, no, it might get somebody to rev up their cars too fast and drive dangerously." But then they went back to the religious thing. But, Holy Hannah, this morning the Premier said, when the cameras were rolling and the newspapers and the scribes were out there with their pens—he's good at this because he wants people to just forget about it—"Oh well, sometimes we do silly things in government." He puts on this pretend mea culpa, but now we find out that he's kind of changed his mind, but kind of not. They're going to grandfather those that already have them, but people like Reverend Ingrid Condie-Bennett, my constituent, whom I went to bat for in the first place and brought this issue to Mr. Bradley's attention, is not going to get her plate. Now they're going to have to review and check the criteria one more time. We'll be here, ensuring that that issue gets fair hearing.

I heard one of the members talking about tourism. This is the logic of the McGuinty government: In the lead-up time to the election, you couldn't turn a television on in this province without being inundated with Tourism Ontario ads paid for with your tax dollars. These were directed at the people in Ontario; they weren't being shown in New York state or Pennsylvania or Ohio or overseas. No, they were being shown to the people of Ontario, preaching to the people who already live here, with your tax dollars. It was nothing but a feel-good kind of story, paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario, to try to further the Liberals' chances of re-election. But now that the election is over and we really do need some input and support for the tourism industry because of our dollar, because Canadians, and Ontarians in particular, are now going to the United States to spend their tourism dollar because they get more bang for the buck, do you see any ads on TV? No, they've been re-elected.

They're spending money on other things, like creating a job for the ex-Minister of Transportation, who was

turfed out of cabinet, and he was so angry that he was going to cause problems. So Mr. McGuinty, the Premier, created a new job for him. He's going to travel around and do some kind of fancy work about saving jobs in the province after costing jobs for the past four years. That's what we are going to be spending our money on—no more tourism ads. We could be trying to bring people into Ontario and keep people in Ontario so they're not spending money in the States with the higher Canadian dollar, but no, we don't see those ads on television anymore.

1700

Waste diversion: That was a big, big issue for the McGuinty Liberals in 2003. They were going to have 60% waste diversion. Their whole environmental record—60% waste diversion; they never even got 40%. It's a joke. That was an ironclad promise that they failed to deliver on.

They talk about their coal promise. Well, they went from 2007, as the leader of the NDP, Mr. Hampton, said; then another throne speech said 2009. This throne speech doesn't even say 2014, although that's the plan. They've got this so-called commitment, and then what do they do? They give money to Dofasco to convert their blast furnaces from natural gas to pulverized coal. That's what the McGuinty government does. So we're shutting down coal, but here they go and they give a grant to Dofasco to convert blast furnaces that run on natural gas to coal. That's their commitment to the environment. There just never was any commitment to the environment.

In fact, the former Minister of the Environment wanted to build a massive garage—they called it the "garage mahal"—to house all of her cars and didn't see anything wrong with it. Finally, when community groups were so incensed that they said, "Uh-uh, we are not standing for this," and she was under a great deal of pressure and, I can assure you, orders from the Premier's office, she withdrew that application. Then when it came time for the cabinet to be selected this time around, Mr. McGuinty said to the former Minister of the Environment, "Here's your sign. Flick off." That's what he said.

Hon. Jim Watson: Not funny.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nobody's laughing, I know.

And where is the Flick Off campaign that you spent half a million dollars on? Where is it? What did you do with it? You were so embarrassed by it that you buried it. You spend money, and when it is a joke and ridiculous, you try to bury it. That's what this government was up to, but nobody wanted to talk about that during the election campaign.

Let's talk about the economy and jobs. Their commitment to jobs in this province amounts to, depending upon whose numbers you're looking at, between 160,000 and 175,000 jobs lost under this government's leadership in the manufacturing sector alone. And what does the Premier do? He blames it on outside forces, he blames it on global competition, he blames it on the federal government, he blames it on the dollar, but he doesn't accept any of the blame himself. That's not leadership.

You can't, on one hand, feel that you can just slough it off like the licence plate issue by getting up there and saying, "Oh, sometimes we do silly things in government," and hope that people will just forget about it and forgive you, and on the other hand, when you do have a serious problem as a result of your economic policies which you have failed to address—you even passed a resolution in the previous Parliament to deal with that and didn't follow up on it—you can't then blame everybody but yourself for all of the problems that you're experiencing. That is not leadership.

In the forestry sector, a tremendous, as the Premier might call it, contraction, but we're losing jobs and we are struggling. What do we have the McGuinty government come out with last year? They bring out a report from the Ontario Parks board that was going to cripple the economy of areas like mine that rely so heavily on the forestry business and forestry industry. The then Minister of Natural Resources threw up his hands and said, "Well, we haven't really had a chance to look at this." But it was he who appointed the people to the board, it was he who gave the direction to the board as to what to come up with. He knew what he was going to get beforehand.

I'm running out of time, unfortunately, but that's an issue we will be able to touch on at a later date. This throne speech is nothing but fluff, no substance for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Wilkinson: It's good to see you back here, Mr. Speaker.

You know, friends, I am delighted to be back here representing the new riding of Perth—Wellington. It was so good to hear from my friend the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, and I want to congratulate him. But you know who he didn't mention in all of his comments? And do you know who the opposition have not mentioned, not even once since they got back to this place? A man who ran on a platform of "leadership matters"—my God, leadership shatters under pressure. I am talking about one John Tory. I have not heard that man's name mentioned here, the leader of your party.

Interjection.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Yes, there is a meeting tonight; yes, that's very important.

And so we talk about, as I say, the leaders who have no names. I want to say to my friend Monte Kwinter—it's wonderful that he has that new position, because he replaces one Ernie Eves. I haven't heard Ernie Eves' name mentioned by the opposition recently. I haven't heard them talk about that. I wonder why? Oh yes, he lost that election.

Now we're back here. I remember this party going on, crowing about the fact that they had this man of impeccable leadership quality. And what did he do? He led you over the cliff. I want to say to my good friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, you did a magnificent job, sir, of winning a magnificent plurality in your riding despite what your leader did to you.

Now I want to talk about the leadership hopefuls who have no name. As I say to my friend Mr. Yakabuski, I hear perhaps that position is going to be open. I look across. I know other Johns in this place, Mr. O'Toole, for example. Mr. Arnott, who I have greatest respect for, my neighbour—I think that job may be coming open, because as long as you won't even mention your leader's name in this House, I think it shows to all of us that that position is going to be open quite soon. Leadership shatters under pressure.

Mr. John O'Toole: I always stay here to listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who's always entertaining and always informed. He does bring a real grassroots approach to it because he does, as his plurality indicates, stand up for his constituents very effectively and very strongly.

What this government is failing to respond to are the real, underlying fundamental concerns of each and every one of us here. It's the contraction in the economy itself, and it's symbolized most importantly in the manufacturing sector which affects my riding of Durham. I think of the families as they move toward Christmas and the imminent layoff of over 1,200 people just at the General Motors complex in Oshawa; many of them who actually live in Peterborough, I am sure, will be affected. This affects families.

Let's not trivialize how important and how meaningful this really is. All the other inside things we talk about aren't really that important when it comes to our main responsibility of dealing with people, with their lives, their families and the state of the economy and opportunity.

The aging population and long-term care was mentioned by Mr. Yakabuski. All of us know people and, indeed, our own family members, whom I've often spoken about right here in the Legislature—our concern is, will there be a place for them in long-term care? Will it be up to a standard of today, that they'll get safe and appropriate cordial treatment? Having the right tools to do that job for the workers in those facilities is very important.

They're not talking about the real issues. When we talked about the restriction in the auto sector, I remember that the Premier's response at that time was that it was a minor contraction. This isn't a minor contraction, and now the new Minister of Revenue, I believe, called those people worried about layoffs crybabies. Let's bring this to a higher level of trying to find solutions. As Minister of Revenue, she should take a more ministerial approach to these things. The more recent issue of uncertainty in the economy is asset-backed commercial paper. I don't think we're getting all the answers. That's what you should be talking about.

1710

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a pleasure to listen to my good friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke provide his comments about the throne speech. When I look at our throne speech, I see a real plan for the

future that's being laid out in detail for the next number of years for the province of Ontario.

I've always had great respect for my friend from Durham; he got his common sense because he was born in Peterborough. I know many members of his family extremely well, and I count upon them as my great supporters in the riding of Peterborough and appreciate his family members.

But it's interesting, when we start talking about manufacturing jobs, where the federal Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, has been. He's been missing in action. When people go to the federal Finance Minister with some positive suggestions to help municipalities cope with the downloaded burden that was placed upon them by Mr. Harris and Mr. Eves in 1997-98, he says, "I can't help municipalities because we're not in the jurisdiction to help municipalities." What a cop-out.

By investing in municipalities, keeping our municipalities strong in the province of Ontario—Mr. Speaker, you know, coming from the riding of Essex, that they're an engine of growth. Strong municipalities lead to a healthy Ontario. I'm begging the federal government to come to the table soon to help our municipal partners to deliver that economic base that is so needed in Ontario today. We can do part of the job; we're willing to do part of job. But we need the federal government to help us in that role to assist municipalities.

Look at the redistribution, where they're going to shortchange Ontario. We're here over the next number of weeks to stand up for the interests of Ontario. We'll be introducing a resolution on the Ontario seats next week. We're here to stand up for Ontario, and I want to hear more from the opposition besides going to a meeting tonight in Rosedale.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to compliment the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on his powerful speech this afternoon and also to congratulate him on his re-election to the Legislature with such a strong plurality—I've heard this today. I don't know what the plurality was, but maybe you could enlighten us in your response—

Interjection: The largest in Ontario.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The largest in Ontario. That's something to be very, very proud of, especially in the face of what was admittedly a difficult election for our party, which the member for Perth–Wellington pointed out to us. Certainly, for my part, I am proud to be part of a party that's led by John Tory, the future MPP—we're not sure for which riding, but I look forward to his assuming a seat again in this House, and look forward to his continued leadership within our party and within our caucus in the coming months, and we're looking forward to the election in 2011.

One issue that was not adequately raised in the throne speech, in my opinion, was municipal infrastructure. We've heard fed-bashing from government members on a number of occasions now, trying to suggest that the federal government should come to the table and provide more money for municipal infrastructure. It would be my

hope that the provincial government makes it a higher priority. I'm glad that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal is here to acknowledge the fact that there is a huge infrastructure challenge in many communities across the province of Ontario; I alluded to this earlier in my remarks a few minutes ago. Certainly, these are issues that need to be addressed immediately by the provincial government.

We need to hear about a greater commitment from the provincial government on the infrastructure issue in the upcoming fall economic statement. I would challenge the Minister of Finance to consider that fact. In discussions with my municipal councils in Wellington-Halton Hills, this is repeatedly brought up, and we need to ensure that there is a basic level of infrastructure in our communities. Without the support of the provincial government, we just can't afford to do what needs to be done, whether it's in the area of municipal bridges, whether it's in the area of sewer and water or in a number of other areas where we need greater provincial support. I would encourage that from this government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the Minister of Research and Innovation and the members from Durham, Peterborough and Wellington-Halton Hills for their comments in response to my comments.

I want to get back to an issue that I couldn't really finish up on, and that was the Algonquin Park issue. We now see that issue rearing its ugly head again. The Minister of Natural Resources—granted, she has not been in the post for very long, so I cut her a little slack. But it's an issue that is going to have to be dealt with, because those people who don't understand the importance of logging in Algonquin Park are going to continue to try to see it stopped. They don't understand that we have a healthier park because it's harvested: fewer forest fires, less disease. Less than 2% of that park can be forested at any given time. That's already the situation.

What we have on the Ontario Parks board—and those people were appointed by the former Minister of Natural Resources; all but one person on that board was appointed by him. They already had a bent that they were going to do everything they could to shut down logging in Algonquin Park. They don't care about the economic impacts. They don't care about the social impacts to communities that surround the park. They only care about getting their way. They're not interested in the counter argument. What we ask the Minister of Natural Resources is to get some balance into the equation. You don't bring out a report that shuts down an industry like that without at least talking to the industry and making them part of the discussions. There's much to be done in this regard, and this government needs to open its mind on that issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to say, it's really good to be back. I enjoy this place very, very much. I want to

welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum and I pay tribute to them. By the way, it's 5:17, live. I pay tribute to the citizens who watch this political channel, because without them, this would be meaningless. As you know, there are only a couple of people who listen in this place. The ones who really listen are the citizens watching, so I pay tribute to you, regulars of this political forum. And to those citizens who might have missed the throne speech, don't worry; you didn't miss much. You didn't miss a thing.

I'm here to talk about a couple of things that matter to me, obviously, and that I think matter to a whole lot of people. The first thing I want to talk about is post-secondary education. Those of you in this Legislature, the Liberals in particular, would know that what you gave to the post-secondary sector is \$300 for books. They're all so happy about that.

Applause.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Especially the new ones, because they have to do that, right? But they will learn. As soon as they go on that side, they stop clapping. But that's what they have to do.

Three hundred dollars for books: Those Liberal members who've got children in university would probably know, depending on the field they're in—my son is in business, God bless. It's close to \$900 for books alone. And McGuinty—God bless his soul, a generous man—is giving him \$300. That is such a big deal. I've got to tell you, you Liberals have got to stand up in this place and say, "Man, we are giving you \$300." Be proud, say it loud, so that the students know how much help you're giving them, so that they can feel good, so that they can thank you for all the kindness, the largesse that the new minister is going to give these young people. Be proud of these announcements. Three hundred bucks—ha. Do you know, my fine Liberal friends on the other side and this side as well, that at U of T, just to be in a general course, it's \$5,300 for tuition fees alone, excluding books, for some of you who don't know, excluding residence, if you have to go to another place to study—5,300 bucks just to be in a general program.

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If you happen to be in a deregulated program, which the Tories did and which the Liberals continue to do—if you're in law at U of T, it's 18,000 to 19,000 bucks. God bless the Liberals; they think it's okay. By the way, if you are in pharmacy, I understand it's \$23,000 to \$26,000—deregulated by the Tories and continued by Liberals, and the Liberals seem to be happy about that. What do they give the students who are in these deregulated programs? Three hundred bucks for books—such largesse. We have to talk about it; be proud. The next speaker, who will be a Liberal: Stand up and talk about this great stuff you are doing.

The deregulated program in medicine: To be a doctor in this province—some of you good doctors probably know—is it \$18,000, \$19,000, \$20,000 a year? Good doctor, what's the debt once you get out? I hear it's about \$100,000, \$120,000. But don't worry, as Liberal

language goes, "They'll be doctors; they'll be able to pay it off: Good God, \$120,000 is not such a big debt. They'll be able to pay it off—no problem."

In the other fields, the general debt load is about \$25,000—generally. Some people have more. My daughter had a \$30,000 debt. She's a teacher, paying it off ever so slowly, but that debt is never going away. But don't worry: She'll pay it off eventually, because that's what it's about. It's not about government obligation; it's about what people need to do for themselves, right?

Liberals, when they were in opposition, attacked that general concept because normally, at least, it's a Conservative concept: the whole notion that you have to do it on your own. Forget about governments giving; it's about you paying your own way and making your own way. As I say, when Liberals are in opposition, they fight just like New Democrats. When they get into government, they're just like Tories. We all know it, it seems, but the good public seems to elect Liberals. They elected them again, so they must like you for some reason or other. I can't for the life of me understand it, but they re-elected you.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Good doctor, I want to tell you as well that in Quebec, tuition fees are a maximum \$2,100 in all fields. There is no deregulation in Quebec. No program is deregulated, allowing universities to charge what they want. In Quebec, our nearest neighbouring province—French-speaking, in Canada—the highest tuition you pay is 2,100 bucks. "How could that be?" you ask.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: In Ontario, they're paying \$4,000 more—

M. Rosario Marchese: Jean-Marc Lalonde, vous aurez la possibilité de parler après moi, s'il vous plaît. Prenez l'occasion de le dire. A \$2,100 maximum—no deregulation.

Often people say, "Let's look at Europe." There's zero tuition in many European countries. But you don't have to go to Europe; in fact, Canadians never go to Europe. They usually go to America, and they say, "Oh, my God, it's worse there," or, "It's better there; we have to compete with them." No. Let's look at the province of Quebec. If the province of Quebec, which is a poorer province, can have such low tuition fees, why does Ontario have close to the highest tuition fees in the country? How do we tolerate it? Why do young people tolerate it? Why do the 80% of the public that says tuition fees are too high—every poll reveals that—support governments that continue to whack them year in and year out? McGuinty Liberals are going to whack students again next September with another 5% increase, and the year following, they're going to get whacked again with another 5% increase.

Interjection.

M. Rosario Marchese: S'il vous plaît, je n'ai pas entendu.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Cinquante-deux mille personnes ont démenagé du Québec en Ontario.

M. Rosario Marchese: Et qu'est-ce que ça veut dire?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Ça veut dire que les avantages sont mieux—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell and the member for Trinity—Spadina, I feel a little left out of this conversation. It should come through the Chair.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, you understand that even if I'm not looking at you, I am always speaking through you. You know that; always.

So I say that if Quebec, a poor province, can do it, then we can do it. Something is wrong with this. How can Ontario be number nine in per capita funding for our post-secondary sector? One of the wealthiest provinces in Canada, and do you recall McGuinty saying we are moving to the general average, the median, the national average, that we're getting to it, that we're going to get to it at some point? They have never, ever got close to it and they're getting further and further away. Why? No money; no pecunia. But if you hear the Premier say it, good God, they're spending billions of dollars. We are, I remind you, good Liberals here and there. We are number nine in per capita funding. We pay the highest tuition fees in the country. We have the largest class sizes in the country. How can you Liberals be proud of the largest class sizes in the country?

Do you know what, mon ami Jean-Marc Lalonde? We have half of our professors in this province teaching on a part-time basis. Full-time load, mind you, but paid part-time. And half of the professors in our community colleges are part-time. Full load, part-time wages. How do you get the quality of education? Where do students go to get help because they're not there? If you're part-time and you've got to work a full load, and you've got to go to another college or university to teach, you're not available to provide the help the students need. We are losing the quality that we desperately need.

If you listen to McGuinty or the education minister, they're saying, "We're investing billions and billions of dollars." There is no evidence of it whatsoever. Did you miss something in the throne speech? Please, not much. Don't bother looking it up. Don't bother reading it. You haven't missed a thing.

Talk about housing: 120,000 people in Ontario are desperately looking to get into Toronto public housing, if it's in Toronto, or other public housing establishments outside of Toronto. There are 120,000 people waiting desperately to get in because they need help from the government.

If you recall, the Liberal Party in 2003 said they were going to build 20,000 units of affordable housing. When our leader pointed out that we've only created 283 units of affordable housing, the now minister of housing, Mr. Jim Watson, said, "Oh, that's not true." I refer the minister to his own facts, to his own civil servants and to any study. It will reveal that there are only 283 units that are affordable, and "affordable" means that it is under \$700, in terms of what people can afford. So what's affordable? Anything that you have to pay, on the basis of what you earn, has to be below \$700. That's what "affordable" is.

The government helped to build other units, but they're not for those who are on low income. They are not affordable. They include in "affordable" all sorts of units that are condominium as well and they give them an "affordable housing" label. Not true. This is language and this is where governments say things that are not entirely correct.

Speaking about housing, we have in Toronto a Toronto Community Housing Corp. which has 186,000 people living in them. They happen to be, for the most part, poor. There are only a few people who pay the market rent. The vast majority of people living at the Toronto Community Housing Corp., of the 186,000 people living in them—are poor. They had a campaign in Toronto where they visited a lot of the local MPPs and a lot of you made promises to them. I hope they're going to come and visit you again, because some of you in those meetings said, "Oh, of course we support your campaign"—you know, some of you met them. They said, "We need \$300 million to be able to repair that housing stock."

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Housing stock that's 30, 40, 50 years old, falling apart in most cases, where there is mould, where there is complete disrepair, where washrooms are not repaired, where ceilings are falling apart. They're waiting for you, Liberal government, to donate but one penny of the \$300 million that they're asking. You fine Liberals, who talk about how much you care for the poor, not one penny for that \$300-million campaign. You loving Liberals, you Liberals who want to deal with the party agenda, you who have poverty so close to your chest—not one cent has gone for that \$300-million campaign to help the poorest in our society, the poorest in Toronto.

But I tell you, it's not just people in Toronto. It's everywhere. I tell you this, good Liberal members, that bill is more than \$300 million. That bill, I estimate, is close to a billion dollars. And you, for four years, have done absolutely nothing to deal with that particular issue. I don't know what you can be proud of; I really don't.

Howard Hampton talked about the \$10 minimum wage. We think it should be given today. Liberals in their traditional way say, "We're going to roll it out in three years."

I'm going to talk about JK and SK in a moment and make some comments about that.

We want to talk about child care. You promised to spend \$300 million for child care. In four years, you've spent not one cent of the \$300 million. But you did spend \$20 million for child care two months preceding the last election. That's what you do. You don't spend. You wait until an election comes, then you spend some of that money and then you claim you've done so much for child care.

You Liberals know there are men and women with children who can't afford to stay home to watch their children, who have to go to work. Many of those people have nowhere to send their children. There is no adequate child care. A lot of this child care is unsupervised, in places where we know nothing about standards. So on

the child care front, you Liberals have done absolutely nothing in that regard.

On the download, you talk so strongly about how much you have a campaign to go after the federal government, and yes, you support the city's campaign to have one cent of the GST. Yet you abdicate your responsibility as a province about what you are going to do. Why don't you give one cent of your PST to the cities so they can deal with their infrastructure problems? Why don't you take responsibility for your own responsibilities, because cities are a responsibility of provinces. Instead of taking that on, instead of providing the funds for the cities, you are so happily engaged in attacking the federal government, as if that is enough by way of your responsibility.

You have, Speaker, and your friends, the fiscal tools to solve some of these social infrastructure questions. Do you think people are simply going to accept the fact that you have absolutely no responsibility and that by attacking the federal government you think you're going to escape your obligations? You're not.

Fiscal tools and powers mean you can raise the money to help cities, like the city of Toronto, that are in fiscal problems. Take one cent of your PST and help the city out. Help them with the TTC problems they've got. You should get back into sharing your responsibility for TTC. You should be paying half of your operating expenses for TTC. If you want people to get out of their cars, the city alone can't do it. You've got to pay the money to be able to build an infrastructure where you've got LRTs, where you've got buses, where you're able to expand your subway system and get people into transit and get them out of cars. If you, Liberal friends—I say from time to time—don't spend the money, this will not happen. Waiting for Harper to solve this—it will not happen. We cannot expect the federal Conservative government to help us in this regard. That's why I say to you that you have the responsibility to deal with this problem.

When it comes to full-time JK and SK, I remind the good citizens watching this program that the Liberals promised in 2003 to have full-time JK and SK. For four years they did absolutely nothing. Now they've promised it again. Now they've hired Mr. Pascal to study the matter. When he's coming back with a proposal is beyond me. With all due respect to Mr. Pascal—I don't know what he will recommend—I have absolutely no faith in this government in terms of what it might do or when it will do it.

Boards of education have deficits. Parents are raising \$560 million a year out of their own pockets because they desperately need to help their own schools. Kids who have a special-education problem are waiting, lingering, for special-ed support. They are not succeeding academically because you're not putting in the supports.

Now you've promised to put in full-time JK and SK, and you have absolutely no money to give. Where are you going to steal the money from to provide that program? Where are you going to steal the money from to provide this program when so much is wrong with our

public and Catholic education system, elementary and secondary?

I'm looking forward to debating these issues with you, good Liberals, in the next four years. I'm looking forward to talking to the citizens of Ontario in a little more detail. I'm looking forward to their coming into your offices and beating you up from time to time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased. This is the first opportunity I've had to speak in the House since the election. I congratulate all my colleagues for coming in.

As the new minister, I listened with great interest to my friend from Trinity-Spadina and all his comments, but particularly those related to post-secondary education. Those of us who listened to his speech would know he had a bit of a theme when he talked about post-secondary education. He talked about the whole theme of saying one thing in opposition and another in government. I think it's sort of an interesting theme when it comes to post-secondary education because anyone who spent any time in this House or on the election trail will know about our fine friends, the New Democratic Party. We know about their support for post-secondary education, and we know about their support for students—when they're in opposition. But when the NDP were in government they campaigned on a promise to freeze tuition rates in the province. I remember that. Actually, they campaigned on the same one.

But let me ask you—and I ask if perhaps the member can respond. When he got into power, they in fact increased tuition fees by 50%. The NDP, who cared so much for post-secondary education when they were in opposition, they got into power to care about students and do you know what they did? They cut, they eliminated up-front grants for students. The New Democratic Party, which talks about the importance of post-secondary education in opposition, got into power and they cut funding for our province's colleges and universities.

I'm part of a government that introduced several years ago the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan, which had in it \$1.5 billion for student assistance. In the recent speech from the throne, we outlined a number of initiatives to further help students access post-secondary education. I am proud of those commitments, and I'm proud of our government's record, especially when compared to the NDP in government.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm always pleased to respond to the ever-passionate member from Trinity-Spadina. I have great confidence in his ability to support and advocate for education at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary level. He does an excellent job of pointing out the failures of this government. In fact, when you talk about promises and opportunity, he is a good watchman, if you will, and will hold their feet to the fire. I feel some responsibility as the transportation critic to point out just one, in the brief time I have. I couldn't compare my passion for education with the member from Trinity-Spadina, but there are a couple of important facts.

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One thing they keep putting on the table here is the over \$17 billion in the Move Ontario plan, but the people of Ontario should know that not one thin dime of that money will be spent in the near term. In fact, it's a plan that dates to two elections ago—an unconscionable expectation out there but no deliverables in the four years that they've been mandated to serve, except the good words.

In fact, if you look at even the fundamentals of the economy, some of my research shows that all five of the major banks and the conference board have slashed the projection for 2008 growth since the Ontario budget, with declines ranging from 0.6 to 1.3 percentage points. This represents billions of dollars of lost revenue.

Ontario is going to be dead last in this great country Canada: once the leader, now the trailer. It just isn't matching all of the commitments they're making. If their history is any predictor of the future, only look to the past to know the future behaviour. They've broken most of their commitments in the past four years, but the people of Ontario won't be fooled twice.

I can say to you now, let's keep an eye on this government and the promises they make. Let's make sure that they commit to a stronger Ontario and a fairer Ontario.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Does anybody have any doubt why this member from Trinity-Spadina was returned resoundingly by his constituents in that riding? The member is completely right on the mark when he reviews all of the matters which government has failed on over four years and raises the issue, rightly so, that the disappointments of the past four years are likely to be repeated; that notwithstanding the government's commitment on everything from poverty reduction to tuition fees, from dealing with child care and putting a child care system in place in this province to fixing the funding formula in the school systems, everyone knows they have not accomplished a darned thing.

So as we look forward to the next four years, we know that the member from Trinity-Spadina is going to be a very effective member of the opposition in making sure that the government's easy talk is backed up by action. And if it is not, we know that members like the member from Trinity-Spadina will be there at every turn holding the government's feet to the fire.

It's unfortunate that the opposition doesn't have more opportunities to actually congratulate the government, but the reality is that the disappointments are crushing. We come here to reflect what we hear in our communities, which is that the government is simply not delivering, has not delivered for four years. And we don't expect much difference.

What is that saying about a leopard not changing its spots? We know very well that we have many more disappointments ahead of us. They continue to have as their strategy blaming governments going back decades and decades, or blaming the federal government but never taking the responsibility of doing the things that

need to be done to bring Ontario up to par with other jurisdictions so that we can have not only a quality place to live for all families and all people but an opportunity for our children to succeed.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I was listening very carefully to my dear friend from Trinity–Spadina. Let me tell you that I got an article here just today. There are 52,770 people from Quebec who moved to the province of Ontario in the last year. That shows that we are really in advance of any other province in Canada, that we are number one in education. When I look at the elementary schools especially, 82% to 84% of our classes in grade 3 and under have 20 or fewer pupils in the class. In Quebec you don't have that, my dear friend.

You were also saying that tuition fees are lower. Why is it that in the Outaouais area they're all crossing the river to go to La Cité collégiale? More than 50% of the students who go to La Cité collégiale are from Quebec. They're paying less in Ontario, my dear friend.

Let me tell you also that the people in Ontario know how well off they are to work in Ontario. When we came up with the labour mobility agreement with Quebec, all the contractors and construction people in Quebec were saying, "Oh, we wish we were in Ontario," and over 10,000 of them cross the river every day from Quebec to come and work in Ontario. That is the way we treat people from any province who want to come and work in Ontario, who want to come to Ontario to have their children educated, because we are well known to have the best education system. The McGuinty government said, in 2003, that our number one priority was education. That is exactly what we're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As usual, I thank my friends and my foes. It's always interesting: When the Liberals comment on the NDP period of 1990, they often say, "The NDP spent too much." Simultaneously, concurrently, they say, "You didn't spend enough. You cut here, but you overspent in other areas and you've got a deficit." You can't win with the Liberals. They either say that you have big deficits or you get attacked for not spending enough. How can you win with that? Only Liberals can do that to me. God bless you.

Secondly, the minister of post-secondary education and training: Again, he's proud of his investment of \$6.2 billion. You would think that if you poured in \$6.2 billion, you would get at least marginally close to the national average. We are not close at all. You fine Liberals are number nine in Canada on per-capita funding. Do you understand what that means? You're not doing very well. You have the highest class sizes in the country. Do you know what that means? You're not doing very well. So you have to look at the facts. You can't simply say, "We're number one." You can't simply say, my friend from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, that the Premier made this a number one priority and therefore things are great. No, you've got to look at the facts. Tuition fees are the highest in the country. By the way, in

Quebec tuition fees are \$2,100. They lead in Canada in terms of social issues. They lead on child care with their \$7-a-day child care. They lead in terms of benefits to families in this country. Quebec leads in so many areas.

Please, we have nothing to be proud of. The throne speech that you delivered? Just chuck it away in the dustbin of history. There's nothing remarkable about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Jim Watson: It is a great pleasure to participate in this debate on the speech from the throne. I want to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment and election today as Deputy Speaker—we look forward to working with you—and thanking all of the members, particularly the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, who led off the debate with such eloquence, and my colleague the honourable member from Ottawa Centre. One of the great things I've learned in the last couple of weeks, meeting our new colleagues who were elected for the first time, is the depth of talent and skill that these individuals bring to this chamber. I very much look forward to working with them in their communities and visiting many of their communities in my responsibilities as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

I also want to take a moment to thank my constituents in Ottawa West–Nepean. I've had the pleasure of representing Ottawa West–Nepean since 2003, and I was deeply touched by their support of my candidacy, and the response I received as I went door to door. I think I lost—the Minister of Health Promotion will be happy to know this—about 12 pounds going door to door. It's one of the greatest diets one can go on. I very much appreciate that vote of confidence.

We have some wonderful neighbourhoods and communities in Ottawa West–Nepean. As I said earlier, I'm very proud of some of the accomplishments that we have worked on together, whether it's improving capacity and facilities at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, whether it's working at Algonquin College, which is located in my riding, to ensure that more young people have an opportunity for a post-secondary education, or whether it's working with the four city councillors who make up the riding of Ottawa West–Nepean: Alex Cullen, Rick Chiarelli, Gord Hunter and Maria McRae. We have a very positive working relationship with those councillors because, at the end of the day, we all share the same constituents and we have to be rowing in the same direction.

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I wanted to take an opportunity just to go through the speech from the throne and offer a couple of comments and perspectives from eastern Ontario and particularly from the city of Ottawa.

One of the first things that His Honour the Lieutenant Governor talked about was the important sacrifices that our men and women serving overseas are making on our behalf and in support of freedom around the world. I'm particularly proud that the first piece of legislation that was passed in this House—and I thank the opposition

members for their thoughtfulness and the speed of passage—was the legislation that will allow us to eliminate the 90-day waiting period for OHIP for family members of the military on bases like Trenton, where my colleague from Northumberland is from, or from Petawawa and those communities that have large military presences.

Also, the same bill dealt with leave for those members of the Armed Forces who are reservists, that they will be guaranteed that their job will be waiting for them after they come back from a mission, whether it's in Haiti or Afghanistan or Rwanda or some of the other places that our Armed Forces are serving in. And I want to pay tribute to our colleague the member for Ottawa-Orléans, because it was the member for Ottawa-Orléans who first pushed and pushed in our caucus and in the Legislative Assembly for these kinds of provisions. Mr. McNeely should be congratulated for making sure that this important issue got the attention it deserved.

Many of us—I suspect all of us—took part in Remembrance Day ceremonies. I had the opportunity of laying the wreath on behalf of the province of Ontario at Carlingwood Mall, and I want to thank the mall manager, Denis Pelletier, for providing the venue. We had hundreds of people out saying thank you to our veterans. The initiative that Premier McGuinty implemented, the Highway of Heroes, is another example of our government saying thank you to those men and women who have given the ultimate sacrifice.

As you go along, one of the key priorities of our government has been and will continue to be education. I think when we were out on the campaign trail, one of the things we all recognized was that there was labour peace in the school system. We had not experienced one single teachers' strike in the Ottawa boards of education in the four years that the McGuinty government was in office. That is something that the parents, the teachers, the support staff and especially the students very much appreciated—maybe not so much the students from time to time, because I suppose they probably wanted a few weeks off here and there. But the learning environment was much more peaceful and much more productive. Test scores are up, dropout rates are down and class sizes are down in JK to 3 in all of our school system throughout the province of Ontario.

I have some wonderful schools that I had the opportunity to visit: Pinecrest, Bayshore, Woodroffe, D. Roy Kennedy. There is a real sense of enthusiasm and a real sense of optimism back in the classroom. The kids, the teachers and parents are in a learning-positive environment as opposed to some of the confrontational approaches that the previous government was famous for.

In post-secondary education, the member from Trinity-Spadina was scoffing at a \$300 textbook and technology grant. Well, you know what? The students I spoke with who live in my riding and go to Algonquin College are very appreciative of the fact that they will be getting, starting next year—not next academic year—a \$300 contribution that could be used for technology,

whether it's software or hardware or laptops or textbooks. We all know, those of us who have gone through college and university, the cost is very expensive and sometimes prohibitive, so that \$300 grant program is going to go a long way to helping a lot of students in our province.

One of the other areas that was focused on was the tourism industry, which is vitally important to the Ottawa economy. I was very proud when our new tourism minister, Peter Fonseca from Mississauga, was able to be in a position, along with Premier McGuinty, to announce an additional contribution to the Ottawa Congress Centre, going from \$30 million to \$50 million. At last, we're finally going to see an expansion of the centre that is going to mean great things for the tourism and hospitality industry, great things for job creation in the city of Ottawa. I want to thank Jim Durrell, the new chair of the congress centre, a former mayor of Ottawa—I know my friend the government whip knows Mr. Durrell—Pat Kelly, the new president of the congress centre; Graham Bird; and many others who have been instrumental in bringing this issue forward.

I congratulate the federal government for coming to the table. I also congratulate the city of Ottawa for increasing its contribution. That was another item that was mentioned in the throne speech, because tourism is important in everyone's community. Whether it's small towns or big cities, the small and medium enterprises make up the vast majority of the tourism industry. We know the challenges tourism is facing with the high dollar, gas prices, border issues. We need to ensure that we have the facilities like the Congress Centre in Ottawa or the marketing campaigns that I know the Conservative Party was scoffing at. But guess what? In a time when the dollar is high, we want to encourage Ontarians to visit other parts of Ontario.

I had the opportunity, between the election and the Legislature coming back, of spending a few days in Prince Edward county, one of the most beautiful parts of the province, with some of the best wineries and eateries that you will come across.

I also want to talk a little bit about the important role that I have had the honour of taking over from my friend the member from Kingston and the Islands: the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I am proud of the track record of the McGuinty government when it comes to dealing in a respectful fashion with the municipal sector. I've got to tell you, I am disappointed beyond belief at the cavalier and arrogant attitude of the federal government when it comes to dealing with our municipal partners. In the 21st century, we need to all be working together to ensure that small towns and big cities have the necessary resources to deal with infrastructure, with social housing, with transit. When the mayors of the major cities in Canada and Ontario, led by people like Mayor Hazel McCallion and Mayor David Miller, went to the federal government and said, "We need your help with some of these infrastructure deficits" that we all recognize have built up over many years, the response

from the federal government, in particular the finance minister, was disgraceful. In a condescending fashion, he said, "We're not in the pothole business" and to stop whining. I can tell you that the response to those comments has gone over like a lead balloon.

Let me read you Carol Goar, a very thoughtful columnist, who wrote a few days ago:

"Either Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has a very short memory or he thinks Ontarians do. A decade ago, he was a senior minister in the Ontario government that imposed a massive restructuring plan on the province's cities....

"Yet Flaherty, who now controls Ottawa's purse strings, accuses municipal leaders of profligacy. He lectures them about expenditure management. He mocks them for whining, sulking and being grumpy....

"Moreover, the finance minister"—Mr. Flaherty—"seems to have forgotten that during his run for the provincial Tory leadership in 2002, he blamed Ottawa for failing to contribute to public transit in Toronto. 'The federal government has shirked its responsibility on that front for too long.'"

We agree with Mr. Flaherty about 2002. We hope that he remembers those comments in 2007.

Mayor Hazel McCallion said in the *Mississauga News*, "Mr. Flaherty has never been kind to municipalities. He was the guy who led the province into downloading. They downloaded everything they could on us when he was finance minister of the province, so he has no feelings for municipalities."

Colleagues from the city of Ottawa, 150 business leaders, civic leaders, labour leaders, all marched on Parliament Hill two days ago. Let me read a paragraph from Louis Lafortune, a very thoughtful journalist for *Le Droit*.

« À court d'argent pour réparer leurs routes, leurs ponts et leurs édifices, le ras-le-bol des leaders

municipaux d'Ottawa a monté d'un cran, hier, avec une manifestation sur la colline parlementaire.

« "Des conseillers municipaux d'Ottawa qui marchent sur la colline parlementaire. Ça ne s'est jamais vu en 150 ans d'histoire de notre ville", a lancé hier le conseiller Clive Doucet, sous la Tour de la Paix »—the first time in 150 years that city councillors and civic leaders marched on Parliament Hill to tell the federal government that this is not about potholes; this is about infrastructure; it's about showing respect to the municipal sector.

I only have one minute left and I have so much more to say. We, as a provincial government, have been there for the municipalities; we're working closely with them on our fiscal review, and we'll be reporting its results in a consensus report in the spring of next year. But in order for us to facilitate the kind of work that's needed in all of our communities, we need the federal government at the table. We don't need their snide comments; we don't need their condescending remarks. We need the federal government with more than goodwill, but with financial resources to help with social housing, with transit, with infrastructure because, as I said earlier, in the 21st century, the municipal sector can't do it on its own. We've been there as a good partner, but we implore the federal government and the Conservative caucus across the way: Pick up the phone, speak to your colleagues on Parliament Hill and ask them to help the municipalities and the local property taxpayers. I look forward to the next four years and I very much appreciate this opportunity to speak.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 10 of the clock Thursday, December 6.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles

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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Oraziatti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
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Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
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Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto–Danforth	
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Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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No. 6

N° 6

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First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 6 December 2007

Jeudi 6 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Deborah Deller

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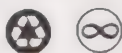
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 6 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 6 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (WAGE SECURITY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (SÉCURITÉ SALARIALE)

Mr. Paul Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program / Projet de loi 6, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin d'établir un programme de sécurité salariale des employés.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Miller, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mr. Paul Miller: The NDP has always been a party that puts working families first. We believe in a good job for everyone, because a good job is the best way to make sure that working women and men share Ontario's prosperity. In Ontario, manufacturing and forestry jobs are some of our very best jobs. But there is a problem in Ontario's manufacturing and forestry heartlands: a job crisis. Since July 2004, 174,000 Ontarians in the manufacturing sector have lost their jobs. In addition to this, more than 9,000 direct jobs in the forest products industry and about 35,000 indirect jobs have also been lost.

I'd like to throw a few more numbers out to show just how important manufacturing is to this province. Manufacturing jobs paid an average of \$20.68 per hour as of August 2007. This is significantly above the average hourly wage of \$18.42 per hour. In large part, this is due to the fact that nearly one in three manufacturing jobs is unionized. As well, these unionized jobs pay wages higher than non-union manufacturing jobs and generally provide a much richer package of benefits and pensions.

But those who have lost jobs are not just numbers. They're people: people with families, mortgages and car payments; people who work hard and play by the rules so

that they can make a decent living. I believe that these decent hard-working folks are facing economic challenges that they haven't faced in the past. In fact, I believe that there are fundamental changes in the economy taking place that require innovative, activist government action now. I believe that for more than a century, manufacturing strength became as much a symbol to Ontario as Niagara Falls and Algonquin Park and established the foundation of prosperity for the province and our working families. Now, amid changing global economic conditions and failed federal and provincial policies, that foundation is threatened to crumble.

I believe that the government must respond now. I believe that the government has to play an active role in protecting good-paying jobs, and when those jobs can't be saved, making sure that workers who have committed a lifetime—a lifetime, Mr. Speaker—to a company are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force in comparable good-paying jobs.

Here are just some of the policies the NDP has been fighting for for the past four years:

- a five-year guarantee of industrial hydro rates so that Ontario manufacturing and resource companies can count on stable, competitive hydro policies at a time when many competing jurisdictions have far lower industrial rates;

- a job protection commissioner to help at-risk companies overcome financial difficulties and save jobs;

- a buy-Ontario policy that would ensure that streetcars, subways and buses continue to be made right here in Ontario, resulting in the protection of thousands of good-paying jobs;

- tougher plant closure legislation that would ensure that everything is done to prevent a profitable plant from closing;

- pension protection that would make sure that workers get every penny they are owed from their pensions when their company becomes insolvent or goes into bankruptcy; and

- an auto fund that would have ironclad guarantees that government funds are not just ending up in head office bank accounts in Detroit or Tokyo without any real job-creating investments being made here in Ontario.

These are just some of the constructive ideas we've put forward, and to this list I am proud to add the employee protection bill. Before I address the specifics of my bill, I want to make it clear that this bill is in no way a substitute for the federal legislation that puts payments to workers at the head of the line when a company goes

bankrupt. The NDP believes that companies shouldn't be allowed to unilaterally allow banks and suppliers to recover their money before workers see a single cent of what they are owed for what they have already completed. I repeat: We badly need federal legislation that reserves that order by giving priority to workers.

All over Ontario, companies are closing without paying their workers the monies owed to them. It would take far too long to go through all the companies that have left town without paying their bills in this province, but a very partial list of companies whose workers would have benefited from my bill are GenFast in Brantford, Amcan in Hamilton, Collins & Aikman in Mississauga, Mahle in Gananoque, Fincore in Toronto, and Hartford Fibre in Kingston.

The purpose of the bill is to create a fund that would compensate workers for unpaid regular wages, overtime wages, vacation pay and holiday pay, termination pay and severance pay. The fund works as follows: A program administrator would establish and maintain a fund to pay compensation to the eligible employees. The act empowers the administrator to charge employers sufficient premiums to maintain the fund. Where employees file a claim for unpaid wages, an employee standards officer will investigate the claim and will issue an order if he or she finds the claim is warranted. The program administrator would determine the amount of premiums that are required to maintain the program fund and is empowered to establish premium rates that will vary with the kind of company. Employers must register with the program, administer and provide various statements relating to total wages and the employer estimates it will pay in a given year. This is a practical, doable proposal. In fact, something very much like what was established by the NDP government in 1991, and it was extraordinarily successful in compensating workers for unpaid wages. The fund was killed by Mike Harris in 1995.

In summary, this bill is about people. It's about the people who have built and continue to build this province. It's heart-wrenching to be at a labour council meeting when proud, strong, middle-aged steelworkers break down while telling their story of how they've lost their jobs and how they can't even pay their mortgages, can't put food on the table for their families and are facing bleak futures with few job possibilities. Not only are the families facing such hardships, but to add insult to injury, there is no protection for their severances, benefits and hard-earned pension plans.

If we want to talk about the causes of the poverty in this province, let's look at the manufacturing job losses in this province and the poor treatment of these workers in their time of need. They were there paying their taxes and helping to build their communities and their province. Now it's our turn, as legislators, to protect them.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: First let me very sincerely applaud and thank the member for Hamilton East-Stoney

Creek for his sponsorship of this bill in this Legislature today. This member has demonstrated in very short order that the people of Hamilton East-Stoney Creek are not going to be let down by their newly elected member of this Legislature, nor are the working people of this province. This first piece of legislation by this member underscores that in a most profound way.

I've got a problem because I really am concerned that people here in this Legislature, where the minimum wage is six digits plus, some of them don't really understand what being a working person means out there in the real Ontario. Like everybody else, a couple of months ago I was walking around my communities knocking on doors and saying howdy to folks, down in the south end. Not telling stories out of school, it was a somewhat low-income district; the housing prices there were modest. You knock on a door, like others, and, you know, sometimes you've got to wait a little longer, right? The member from Hamilton Mountain understands that, Ms. Aggelonitis, because she was out there too. Sometimes you've got to wait a little longer, because maybe it's a senior and they had a little trouble getting to the door; maybe they were at the kitchen sink and they had to dry their hands. I waited a little longer. It was a woman who was, oh, in her early forties. She was still wearing the restaurant shirt—I know the restaurant—you know, with her name on top of the pocket. She looked tired. It was 4:30 in the afternoon. I asked her, "You work there, huh?" She said, "Yeah." I said, "You look tired, ma'am, I've got to tell you." She said, "I am." She works a 40- and 50-hour week for sub-minimum wage because, you see, restaurant workers don't make minimum wage, because it's presumed that the tips will make it up. But I know the restaurant: It's not Jamie Kennedy at the Gardiner up the road here, where I know some of my colleagues across the way are inclined to wine and dine from time to time, and where an entree is 25 or 30 bucks and the tab at the end of a meal is 80 or 90 bucks a person. Well, 10% or 15% of 80 or 90 bucks for a serving person is not shabby. But when you work where this woman works, and people are inclined to buy their \$1 coffees or their \$2.50 club sandwiches—because those are the kind of prices at this restaurant—10% or 15% of \$2.50 really doesn't make up for the sub-minimum wage of that woman and workers like her who are on their feet all day. Talk about working hard. We work hard? Horse feathers. That woman works hard.

Let me tell you, working women and men across this province, in plants, in forestry, in farmers' fields, in the retail and service sectors, they work hard, and increasingly they are working harder and harder for less and less, lower and lower wages.

This Friday afternoon I am joining Howard Hampton—or perhaps he's joining me—down in Port Colborne. We're going to be visiting some workers who have been forced out on strike down at the Port Colborne Drop Forge. What's one of the issues? The company wants to eliminate the defined-benefit pension plan and—oh, dare I refer to the leadership shown by so many

people in this Legislature?—replace it with a defined-contribution pension plan: not particularly impressive and not particularly meaningful for those workers who are aging and now have become fearful of their retirement rather than looking forward to it.

Then, I tell you, the worker after worker after worker, women and men, who have lost their jobs here in this province are forced into despair, and despair that I fear many members of this Legislature simply don't understand. It's not just a matter of walking down the road and picking up another job, because, let me tell you, the change in lifestyle from a good manufacturing unionized job, a value-added job, a wealth creation job, where you might be making \$20, \$25 an hour—mind you, you're working hard for it—or sometimes you're making \$17, \$18 an hour, the transition in lifestyle for that family and community when that job gets downgraded to one of Mr. McGuinty's \$8.25-an-hour jobs, I tell you it's dramatic.

New Democrats are going to be holding this government to account, because the despair out there across Ontario is growing, the fear is escalating, and the tragedy is compounding. Mr. Miller's bill today goes a small way to addressing that. I urge members to please support it.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour, I'm privileged to have the opportunity to join in this debate today as it relates to Bill 6, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Wage Security), 2007.

Since 2003, one of our government's focuses has been job creation. We can proudly say that as a government, we have been able to add 327,000 net new jobs in Ontario, with the projection of another 270,000 new jobs in the next three years.

While we understand the motivation behind this proposed legislation, this bill is another example of the NDP's inability to draft public policy that works for Ontarians, and puts the growth of our economy at risk. Legislation like the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Wage Security), 2007, would put more pressures on business and could potentially put Ontarians out of work.

In fact, in the past, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has strongly opposed this idea of a wage earner protection fund. Their argument was that this fund would increase the burden of payroll taxes and that well-run firms should not be required to subsidize the poor business practices of others. Our government recognizes the challenge that employees, companies, unions and communities face when a company closes, and we have taken action.

Through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities: I remember earlier this year, Minister Chris Bentley visited Sheridan College in Brampton, and I was quite impressed to see what Sheridan College is doing in terms of training students in modern state-of-the-art machinery—I don't know what the technical term was—in the machine shop tooling business, because there are a lot of companies in my riding that do have employment for these people, and I know of a few of these businesses that have problems recruiting skilled people. I made a

point of mentioning that to the president of Sheridan, and I commended him along with Minister Bentley for all the good work that they are doing.

Through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade: The NDP called our trade mission to China and India junkets. But what happened? Last year, TADA from India opened up in Mississauga and created 300 good jobs. That is just one company out of the many that we contacted while we were in India with the Premier, and there are many, many more that are looking to do business. So what we are doing to progress in Ontario, the NDP is calling a junket. What a shame. And they are saying they care about Ontario and employees and job losses.

Getting back to this bill, under the current Employment Standards Act, enforcement of employee wage claims policies are in place. Currently, the policy of the ministry in the context of a claim from an employee whose employer or former employer is bankrupt or insolvent is as follows: The ministry first accepts a claim and does their investigation. They appoint an employment standards officer, who further investigates, and if there is any entitlement, a proof of claim is issued. In the case of a privately appointed receivership, an order to pay wages is sometimes issued against an employer.

So there are provisions already in place. The Employment Standards Act also provides that related employers and directors may also be liable to pay entitlements owing to employees. As such, they may be made the subject of orders under the Employment Standards Act.

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Also, this is federal jurisdiction. There is already a bill at the federal level, Bill C-12, which has passed second reading in the Senate. I don't know what the NDP is trying to accomplish here. Bill C-12 is aimed at protecting employees' wages and would largely accomplish the objectives of this member's bill, making it redundant. Bill C-12 would help employees who unfairly lose out on wages when an employer files for bankruptcy or is put under receivership. The Ministry of Labour is committed to continue to work with our federal government on the implementation process to ensure that the Ministry of Labour's current policies and claims process under the Employment Standards Act interact smoothly with the federal program.

This bill is redundant. The NDP doesn't know what they're talking about in terms of formulating policy for Ontarians. It's for this reason that I cannot support this bill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I would like, first of all, to congratulate my friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—who, like me, is a newcomer to this House—for being the first person up with a private member's bill in this session. It's some testimony to his conviction. Congratulations.

For me and for our party, this is really a question of philosophy. I can speak with some degree of knowledge to this, because I've been a private businessman myself—a private business owner—and I know what it is to feel the pressures of that particular position.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: God forbid you should have to pay your bills.

Mr. Peter Shurman: That's right: You do have to pay your bills.

But what this bill proposes is to create yet another fund for NDP cradle-to-grave care of everything they think is wrong with this province. Employers—and at one time, almost, myself—have caved in under the financial pressures and more and more are feeling financial pressures that cause that because of the economic conditions we face today, which include a fluctuating dollar, globalization, the high business tax rates in the province of Ontario, high electricity costs in Ontario—things that haven't been addressed, for example, in the throne speech—and the list goes on and on. What happens is that businesses fail, become insolvent, go bankrupt, shut down and leave, as the case may be, and it's a very sad thing to see. But nobody looks at what's behind it. It's bad business and it affects the people who own the business as much, if not more, than the employees.

What's being proposed in this bill is, "Let's pile another imposition on these companies in bad times, so that they have to pay more money into a fund that ultimately is for distribution to employees." The federal government already has legislation on the books that prioritizes employees as primary creditors. Perhaps, as my friend suggests, this is not strong enough, and perhaps the feds should consider strengthening that legislation so that there is primacy for employees in the distribution of whatever comes from a bankruptcy. However, this is not a provincial matter.

This bill views the corporate world as, in one word, "bad" and employees as "good." I have seen the bad side as a small business person. I have faced insolvency. I've had the bank come to my door and say, "We want a collateral second mortgage on your house," and I've had the absolute negative feeling of going home to my spouse and saying, "They want a collateral second mortgage on the house," and looking at it from the standpoint of not only putting 100 or 150 employees out of work, but perhaps not being able to pay the mortgage myself. I got by that one; some companies don't.

Before we pass legislation that says, "Pay yet another tax, Mr. Employer," because that's what this fund would be, "and another brick to the thing that's causing you to fail," we have to look again and perhaps see it as a function of the federal government to ensure that there is priority for employees when a business fails and not lay it on the step of the employers.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I'm pleased to rise to support An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program. This amendment to the act would put working families first. Ontario is going through a manufacturing and forestry job crisis right now. It doesn't need to be that way, but our government being what it is, here we are in a crisis, and with a job crisis, workers and their families suffer. The NDP believes that we can do something to lessen that suffering by amending the Em-

ployment Standards Act. We believe that government has a role to play in protecting good jobs, and, when those jobs cannot be saved, in making sure workers are treated fairly and are given every opportunity to return to the labour force.

Aujourd'hui, mon collègue, M. Paul Miller, présente un projet de loi qui modifie la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi afin d'établir un programme de sécurité salariale des employés. Saviez-vous qu'en Ontario aujourd'hui, il est possible pour une compagnie de fermer ses portes et de foutre le camp sans jamais avoir à payer le salaire, les vacances, le temps supplémentaire ou le prime de séparation qui sont dûs à ses employés? Cette pratique est beaucoup plus courante qu'on ne le pense et c'est ça que le projet de loi va changer.

Ce projet de loi va garantir à tous les travailleurs et travailleuses en Ontario que si jamais ils se retrouvent dans une situation non enviable, que leur employeur s'en va, ils n'auront pas à subir le traitement que j'appelle « tourner le fer dans la plaie », que non seulement tu perds ton emploi, mais en plus, tu ne te fais pas payer ce qui t'est dû. Ceci n'est pas acceptable et le projet de loi vise à changer ça.

As my colleague Paul Miller has explained, the purpose of the bill is to make sure that employees are compensated for unpaid wages, overtime, vacation pay, termination and severance when a company closes. Isn't it incredible that in this day and age, legislation like that doesn't already exist and that some companies are allowed to up and leave without paying the workers the money that they owe them? Well, it's happening right here in Ontario right now.

J'espère que les membres de tous les partis verront l'importance de protéger les travailleurs et travailleuses de l'Ontario.

I, for one, think it is high time that such legislation be put into place so that people never have to go through that kind of hardship again. I hope that my colleagues would agree.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to provide some remarks this morning on Bill 6. I certainly want to welcome my new colleague to the House, the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. I know that with his background, he'll certainly make a contribution to discussions in this place.

I represent the riding of Peterborough. Peterborough is the home of a diverse manufacturing base. We have everything from General Electric, which has the headquarters for its nuclear products division in Peterborough, to Quaker Oats, which is a world-renowned supplier of food products, breakfast cereals, to the North American market. We're very proud of those industries, along with Siemens Milltronics, which is a world leader now in manufacturing calibrated instruments throughout North America and in several other markets.

We do know that over the last number of years, the appreciation of the Canadian dollar from 63 cents US to, a couple of short weeks ago, when it hit a historical high of US\$1.10, has put tremendous pressure on Ontario's

manufacturing base. Certainly, it has put pressure on manufacturers in Peterborough.

Over the last year or so, we did lose MasterBrand Cabinets, which was a manufacturer of kitchen and bathroom cabinets. In that particular case, those jobs were moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where MasterBrand has a much larger facility to get those kind of production runs that are needed in order to achieve the economies of scale to stay competitive in the North American market. But I must commend MasterBrand Cabinets, because they certainly treated those departing employees extremely well. They worked with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to provide a transition to allow them to renew their skills, to take advantage of additional employment opportunities in the Peterborough area.

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Over the last number of years—I wanted to thank my colleague the member from Northumberland—Quinte West and the RED program, which provided some \$900,000 in financial assistance to establish a manufacturing training program in the riding of Peterborough. I'm pleased to report this morning that 2,000 employees have now been through that program in order to upgrade their skills for the respective businesses that they work at in order to keep those businesses competitive.

But I want to touch upon, today, an area of manufacturing that's very important to my riding in Peterborough, to the community of Port Hope and my good friend the member from Northumberland—Quinte West to Mississauga and the people in Cambridge, and that is the nuclear industry, which employs so many individuals at high-paying manufacturing jobs in the province of Ontario. I said at the opening of my remarks that we have 500 employees directly related to that industry in my riding of Peterborough. I had several meetings during the campaign with my good friend Mike Keating, who is president of local 524 of the Canadian Auto Workers in my riding of Peterborough. He looked upon my friends opposite, who certainly are not supportive of expanding that particular industry in Ontario and Canada in order to retain those manufacturing jobs.

Let me put it in perspective. The people who are members of CAW 524 who work in GE Peterborough—their salaries are about \$30 per hour, including benefits, the kind of jobs in my riding that allow those individuals to go to Jack McGee's Chevrolet-Oldsmobile to buy a new Chev Impala that is manufactured just down the road in Oshawa. It gives them the kind of economic base to go to my good friend Steve Cavanagh, whose family has owned T.J. Cavanagh appliances for some 90 years, so they can buy that new fridge and stove and sustain the local economy in Peterborough.

I'd be remiss if I didn't get it on the record that the last four projects that AECL were involved in in China were on time and on budget. That addresses the myth that gets perpetuated around here that these nuclear stations cannot come in on time and on budget. In fact, with the new development of modular construction, helped develop by engineers in Peterborough, when these projects go ahead,

they use modular construction, where the modules are produced in Ontario and then transferred to the site, where they're assembled to start generating electricity. We do know here in Ontario that to keep businesses operating and keep the lights on, we need 14,700 megawatts of base power, and we know that generating electricity from nuclear sources allows us to meet that demand of 14,700 megawatts of baseload capacity on a daily basis.

So when we want to defend manufacturing jobs in Canada and Ontario, I don't think we can pick and choose. I think we try to look after all the manufacturing base in Ontario and the key investments that we need to make in terms of the AMIS program, the advanced industrial manufacturing program, which has provided those financial resources needed for manufacturers in Ontario to refine their product base in order to stay ahead of the curve. It's interesting: That's the real challenge that we have, with the appreciation of the Canadian dollar, the fact that China and India and Brazil are now becoming economic colossi and are challenging certainly not only Canada but North America, and how we must make those key investments to make sure that we can remain competitive. We've been doing that on a priority basis through a number of programs that we believe will achieve results.

The other thing: We keep investing in elementary, secondary and post-secondary education to make sure that we have a workforce in Ontario that meets the needs of the future.

I'll talk about the challenges. Research In Motion, which manufactures the BlackBerry—one of the principals of that company is a Peterborough native, Jim Balsillie. I've heard him from time to time—in fact, every six months they must reinvent the little BlackBerry that we have to stay ahead of the competitive curve. I think that does provide an example for other manufacturers in this province of the need to stay ahead of the curve, to keep reinventing products that will meet the market demand throughout the world. That's critically important.

But why was Research In Motion so successful? It was the entrepreneurial talent of one Jim Balsillie and his partner Mike Lazaridis, but frankly, they took advantage of the University of Waterloo, the key investments that have been made there not only by this government—I always believe in giving credit where credit is due; the previous Conservative government of Ontario made strategic investments in the University of Waterloo. Out of that came the BlackBerry product, which now gives Ontario and Canada an international reputation. Those are the kinds of examples I think we need to champion and be involved with.

Secondly, I also want to talk about another company in my riding of Peterborough, FisherCast Global. There's another interesting, innovative company. For years and years and years, they have been involved in zinc die-casting in the Peterborough area, but they found out over the last number of years—again, manufacturing jobs that

pay \$25 and \$30 an hour, the kind that sustain an economy—that companies in Brazil, India and China can now make zinc die-cast products more competitively than we can here in Ontario. Smart company that they are, FisherCast are now reinventing themselves to get into magnesium die-casting, to be one of the world leaders in producing that product. We know that the auto industry, which is looking at ways today to remain competitive, is looking at introducing more and more magnesium die-cast products, because magnesium as a material is both harder and lighter, which allows car companies to increase fuel economy and, in fact, reduce their environmental footprint.

Again, those are the kind of companies that we need to get out there, that we need to make those investments in and champion. That, I believe, is the appropriate role for government to play. In fact, we have been demonstrating clearly over the last four years—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to speak this morning in this 39th Parliament of Ontario and to congratulate the new member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his recent election and on presenting the first private member's bill to be discussed in this session. Good for you; congratulations and welcome.

Bill 6, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 to provide for an Employee Wage Security Program: I think the timing of this discussion on this type of program is interesting, seeing as how in this House already this week we've talked extensively about the economy and the numbers of manufacturing business sectors that are struggling in these tough economic times. The leader of our opposition party, the member from Leeds–Grenville, spoke of over 150,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector alone that we've had in this province. It's a critical time in our province right now.

Earlier this week, on Monday morning in a terrible snowstorm, I held a round table for business leaders, chambers of commerce, local business development associations and representatives from the city of Kawartha Lakes, and they are hurting. Some retail stores have a third of the business they should have. This time of the year, especially, they're laying off staff, not hiring staff. There are many factors involved in that—certainly, the high cost of the Canadian dollar is one of them—but when you see that they're letting staff go at this time of year, you know how much of a struggle it is for small businesses to try to keep themselves afloat, with high energy costs, taxes and, as I mentioned, the Canadian dollar.

In the manufacturing sector in Lindsay alone, unfortunately, I've had two closures within this year: Fleetwood manufacturing, which manufactured RV trailers, hundreds of jobs lost; and in the last six weeks what used to be Bonar Plastics and now Promens, it was called, announced the closing of their doors and another loss of 80 jobs. When you talk about the size of the community of the city of Kawartha Lakes, around 75,000 people,

that's a lot of job layoffs. That's a huge economic impact for our area.

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I'm phoning the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. There's a contact there in human resources to work with the companies. We've opened a couple of offices in which the employees can come in and get some human resource guidance training and on what's available to them.

It's just a tremendous challenge that I don't think this government can ignore anymore. The times here are not going to get better. We've heard prediction upon prediction from many financial institutions about the not-good projections that are to come. So it's time for this government to take heed that they need to take this seriously and do what they can to help our employees and to help our employers as well.

Small business, the entrepreneurs and the manufacturing companies are already responsible for so many, many things. First of all, they supply the jobs in the first place and they pay wages, employment insurance, vacation, holiday pay and sick pay. You can go on and on with the extensive list they have of what they're paying for. There are many, many good employers out there who are fighting for their employees and fighting to keep their companies going so they can provide the jobs for their employees.

So when this legislation suggests to me that the businesses and manufacturers aren't already doing enough, that concerns me, because they are working and trying to survive, providing jobs, and making the best of the economic situation that has been put before them. They're already overburdened. When this is a new tax on business and job creation—I think the new member from Thornhill hit it on the head when he said, "We don't want to go down that path as a principle of our party." New taxes are coming in: another burden on employers.

We have to be very, very careful that we don't crush any more employers—more employers go out; less jobs are there. We want to provide a climate for these employers to grow, prosper and provide jobs. This bill concerns us in that this will just put another burden on our employers and will drive more of them out of our province.

We should be focusing our efforts on trying to reduce the red-tape burden on small businesses. We think this bill we have before us this morning will only add to that burden.

There's no question that Ontario's economy is hurting. I would be remiss not to mention the agricultural sector and the burdens that they've been facing for many of the past several years, but especially right now with the hog and pork industry and the tremendous, critical time that they're facing.

I praise the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his first private member's bill, but we certainly have a lot of concerns on this side of the Legislature in regard to the content of this bill.

I want to thank you for the time allowed this morning by this debate.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It is indeed my pleasure to have a few remarks on the bill introduced by my new colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, Paul Miller. I'm very thrilled to have yet another New Democrat elected in the Hamilton area. People might know that we now have several New Democrats, both at the provincial level and at the federal level, very strongly representing the issues of the people of our community.

Of course, that is reflected in this very first effort of our new member, Mr. Paul Miller, who brings to the House today a private member's bill that really speaks to the issues that are being faced by workers in our city. I have to congratulate him for that. He ran a campaign that spoke to the hard-working families of Hamilton, and his first order of business was to bring a bill forward that basically reflects what he heard from them. What he heard from them was story after story of tragedy. He explained that in his remarks, and I'm going to reflect on that too because that's my community too and those are the same stories that I heard as well.

It's absolutely wrong to have a situation where workers work extremely hard and where they, day after day, week after week, year after year, toil in these factories and where, through no fault of their own, at the end of the day, the company ends up closing, maybe taking its orders and its work south of the border to its other plants.

I'll describe a situation where exactly that happened in a community close to ours, where, through no fault of their own, the money that they're owed—this is not money that's coming off of some place where nobody knows why people might think that they should expect this money; this is money that they earned. This is severance pay, in some cases. These are wages, in some cases, that have not been paid. This is sometimes overtime pay that has not been paid. This is real dollars that people have earned and deserve and, by the laws of this province, are entitled to. So I don't know why anybody here would say that these workers and these families for some reason have to bear the burden of the companies that they work for breaking the law when they happen to go out of business. That is what's happening: They're breaking the law. They're not providing the workers the wages, the severance and the vacation pay that they are entitled to in the province of Ontario. And that is just wrong.

I hear my colleagues here in this House talking about the sympathy for the companies. Certainly everybody has sympathy for the companies. But let's face it, these companies are going off and setting up shop or taking their business, in many cases, to other plants in other jurisdictions around the world, and leaving our workers hanging out to dry, leaving these families in a situation where in many, many cases, in fact the vast majority of cases, they lose their homes. The stress and anxiety that is caused in these families is absolutely enormous: divorces, kids who can't go to college all of a sudden because the money is not there anymore. Let's not pretend that this bill does anything but provide the appro-

priate amount of justice for the workers, who through no fault of their own are being denied the very basic things that they deserve like the wages that they worked for and the severance pay that they have entitled to. That's what we're talking about here. What the heck is the problem with that?

There is a company—and my friend from Brantford will know about this company—named GenFast. It had a plant in another jurisdiction across the border. It decided that notwithstanding the fact that the Brantford plant was more productive and had better-quality production, they were going to move their business, all of their orders, to their American sister plant. The problem was that there were a number of outstanding orders that still existed at the GenFast plant in Brantford. They told those workers, "You do what we need to do and we'll pull together and we'll get those orders filled and we'll make sure that we can at least as a company fulfill the obligations to our customers, to our clients." Well of course, they want to that, they want to keep their goodwill as a corporation. Obviously that makes sense. What they never told the workers is that all that overtime they put in, all that extra work they put in to save the company's good reputation, to make sure that none of those orders were not fulfilled—they never told the workers that at the end of the day they were going to shut that plant and walk away and not pay the workers the overtime that they earned while trying to help the company in its adjustment. You tell me that that's fair and you tell me that that's right and you tell me that that's the kind of province that we're happy to live in. That is just wrong.

I congratulate Mr. Miller. He has done an excellent job in bringing forward this bill because it is about everyone. It's not just about one sector of the economy. And I can tell you that those workers who worked at GenFast certainly are not spending money in the local economy in Brantford the way they were when they were gainfully employed and working hard at GenFast. There's many, many plants that have the same history. In Hamilton we can name them off very quickly: Rheem Canada, Camco and Amcan. I know the member had mentioned a number of them in his own speech as well. Levi's—I mean the list goes on and on for the Hamilton community only. Across the province it's the same story. It's time for this Legislature to acknowledge and recognize the fact that workers have a right to the kinds of compensation that are guaranteed by the laws of this province or that at least should be at this point in time.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to extend my congratulations to Mr. Miller, the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. Your first bill, your first time in the Legislature—I commend you as your background would lead you to bringing this forward.

Your colleague from Hamilton as well mentioned the importance of employment standards. I think all of us here would admit that the employer has legal and legislative responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act as it exists today with respect to holiday pay, overtime, hours of work and severance provisions. I think

that's the issue here. Quite honestly, this government is not following the current legislation and enforcing the act as it exists.

1050

Even taking a cursory look at this bill, Bill 6, an Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, I am wondering if it is actually in order. I'm on my own on this one, but I say that because it requires the government to create a position, which is a program administrator, and it provides some ability to collect revenue and make sure there are reports filed. In private members' business you are not allowed to require the government to spend money. That's one of the provisions of private members' business, but I'm sure legislative counsel know what it's about.

But what does it mean to me and my constituents and the people of Ontario? In the riding of Durham, I am just recently going through a lot of calls and anguish about the very same issue facing a very large corporation, in both cases General Motors. I'm reading a release by Chris Buckley, who is the president of the CAW, Canadian Auto Workers, Local 222—this is from August, this past summer—about the announcement of General Motors slashing 1,000 jobs, and it could be as many as 1,200 jobs. Mr. Buckley goes on to say he was shocked—and I understand he is shocked. Imagine how those individuals, those families, are shocked, especially when this takes effect on January 1. Merry Christmas. Mr. Buckley goes on to say that the “layoffs will have a trickle-down effect in the community, impacting about 7,500 other jobs linked to GM.” That's in the hospitality and other sectors. Thank you very much, Dalton McGuinty, for no plan—7,500 families; probably as many as 10,000 individuals affected by the plight of the economy.

A real person in the news this week locally in Durham—it's dated November 30, from the business section of this week. It reads, “Trish McAuliffe”—she is pictured here, a young person—“shuffles through newspaper job advertisements, looking for her next step of employment.” The article goes on to say, “... the high Canadian dollar hurting exports, lack of future production, the downsizing of shifts and plants in Oshawa—the couple,” that's Mr. and Mrs. McAuliffe—“will be permanently laid off by the end of the week.” She goes on, describing her future as “bleak”. Thank you, Dalton McGuinty, Merry Christmas.

He seems to have no plan. If you look at the fundamentals in the economy, the conference board and all five top banks have said Ontario's GDP growth is going to slip by 0.6% or 1.6%, which means billions of dollars of lost revenue; that the province is going to be 10th in Canada in terms of productivity and prosperity.

I have another article here, and this is worthwhile. This is about my constituents and the work that is going on in the community to protect the vulnerable economy that we have in manufacturing—over 150,000 jobs lost. This article is in the same paper that I just quoted before, November 30, the business week section. It reads, “Action Centre Opens for Lear Layoffs” today.

“Facing their last day of work” today “some 350 workers at Lear Whitby are now facing the pressing question: What's next?” What's the plan, Premier McGuinty? They go on to say:

“According to Heather McMillan, action centre coordinator, the average age of those laid-off from Lear is 39, meaning there are few retirees among the group.” These are families—39. Imagine where they would be. I can just imagine the demise and the hopelessness of feeling. So it is about employment.

I commend Mr. Miller for saying, first, that there is a fiduciary responsibility of employers to comply with the Employment Standards Act that exists today with respect to severance, hours of work, entitlement to overtime. That is not the dispute here. What we don't need is more bureaucracy; we need the Ministry of Labour, under the new minister, to simply do their job. Mr. Duguid is the new minister. He's young, potentially inexperienced, and I'm not sure he has the full gravitas of Mr. Miller's Bill 6 here. But it all comes down to the plight of the economy, the weakness in the manufacturing sector, and no plan by Dalton McGuinty. It's getting worse, not better. The evidence I've just read from my riding—and Ms. Scott, from Victoria-Haliburton-Brock has said the same thing, and Mr. Shurman, has said the same thing. The evidence is on the table.

I'm putting to you, the Premier: What plan do you have for the province of Ontario, which is now almost dead last in this country? It's discouraging to the families I've cited here to think that it takes a brand new member, Mr. Miller, to come up with at least some idea that says, “Enforce the legislation that exists today.”

I'm disappointed, as usual. There's no plan by this government.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In the few seconds left to me, I want to congratulate my new companion from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, and also say a remark about our new member from Thornhill. He talked about cradle-to-grave social services. Yes, that's exactly what we stand for in the New Democratic Party, and we're proud of it. Look at Sweden, where they actually provide that as well as a vibrant manufacturing community.

What they're saying is, “Banks first, workers last.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank my esteemed colleagues, but back to business. The government claims they're going to help the people of Ontario create jobs, attract business, stimulate the economy. Are they now saying that they don't care about the thousands of Ontarians who are facing financial ruin? Are they now saying that they don't care about the people who create the wealth for these owners? Is there no responsibility to the people who have spent their whole lives in these industries?

The erosion of our base industries is happening—foreign-owned companies all over this country and this province, flourishing in their own countries. If things are

bad in Ontario, these companies are going to pull out and they're going to go back to their native countries and they are going to leave people out of work here. That's going to happen.

I'll give you an example. My colleagues mentioned that they were concerned about the burden on business. I'll tell you about the company that I worked at—Stelco in Hamilton. Stelco in Hamilton was in trouble. In our humble opinion, the company was undervalued at \$150 million. It was bought by Tricap and Appaloosa, financial institutions. They bought it for \$150 million. They brought up a CEO from the States, a Mr. Mott, to take over the operations, and nothing was done or changed in that company as far as new investment, new equipment—nothing. In 18 months they sold that company to US Steel for \$1.1 billion, a 740% profit for Appaloosa and Tricap. Who suffered? The people in Hamilton, the people who were laid off, the people who were forced into early retirement because of threats of closure.

These are the things that are going on our province that my colleagues on the other side are ignoring. You need to think about the people of this province—the little guy. That's what the NDP stands for—the little guy.

With all due respect, I'm extremely disappointed in the response of the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Orders of the day.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2007
LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE
MINIMUM)

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. DiNovo, pursuant to standing order 96, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all the honourable members. It's a pleasure to stand and speak about a phenomenal campaign, the campaign for a \$10 minimum wage. At the pleasure of the House, I'd like to outline a little bit of the history of that campaign.

It started, really, in 1989, when all parties in our federal government decided that they wanted to eliminate child poverty by the year 2000. Of course, that was a phenomenal disaster and failure. Here we are, in 2007, with heightened child poverty. But the phoenix that grew from those ashes was a group called Campaign 2000. They are still very much active. They were the ones who initially, as far as I could find out, put forward this idea of a living, \$10-an-hour minimum wage.

I want to say—and I'm going to repeat this many times in the next 10 minutes—that the reason for \$10 an hour is that this is the poverty line. That is to say that if you are earning a wage that is less than \$10 an hour, you are earning a wage in poverty. The McGuinty government has put forward a staged increase of minimum wage, at every stage of that increase—we're now only at \$8 an hour—the person earning that amount of money is earning it in poverty.

1100

This is a government that says they want to do something about poverty. Here's a simple act of political will that would make a huge difference, and that is to bring the minimum wage up to the level of poverty. This would affect 257,000 across our province who are making minimum wage; that's only \$8 right now. It would also further affect almost a million people who are earning \$10 an hour or under. They also would be affected. There, you would automatically and almost immediately raise those families out of poverty.

From the start of Campaign 2000 and then when I was elected, I came to this Legislature knowing that I wanted to do something about those that I'd worked with in ministry, those hard-working families who are using food banks, unable to pay the rent at the end of the month and still working full-time, sometimes two jobs. I had the luck and good fortune, as I've had this time, to introduce a private member's bill very soon after I was elected. I went to our leader Howard Hampton and said, "I want to introduce a bill for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage," and he said, like a good leader, "Go for it." I went for it.

Not only did I go for it, but Toronto and York Region Labour Council took up the campaign under the direction of John Cartwright, and the Ontario Federation of Labour took up the campaign under Wayne Samuelson and others. We took that campaign across Ontario. Fifteen thousand e-mails came into this Legislature, every single one of them demanding a \$10 an hour minimum wage now. That happened as well as significant polling across this province—as well, I might point out, a by-election loss for the McGuinty government in York South-Weston, in part because of the \$10-an-hour minimum wage campaign.

Then, and only then, did we see this government move. Certainly, they were not speaking about the minimum wage back last year in October, but they were speaking about it in the new year. Why? Because of the loss. Why? Because of the polling. Why? Because of the phenomenal e-mail campaign and the campaign around Ontario to build support for this.

So that's a little bit of the history. Then, of course, we all know what happened. They brought in this incremental increase: \$8 now, going up next year, going up the next year after that, and then finally \$10.25, three years from now. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to point out that in eight days, this government gave themselves a 25% pay increase—eight days for the government and for the cabinet committee that sits looking at poverty, and three years for the poorest members of the working families of this province. So I contrast one with the other.

Certainly, we're looking at facts here, facts about poverty that are not mine alone. I'm going to read from the Ontario Federation of Labour's fact sheet about the minimum wage campaign:

"A single parent working full-time at minimum wage in Ontario would have an income \$6,676 dollars below the poverty line.

"Today's minimum wagers receive 20% less in real wages (adjusted for inflation) than they did 30 years ago."

I remember my father in the 1970s speaking about soup lines, talking about kitchens opening up, talking about people sleeping on floors of churches, and I said that that could never happen in a place like Ontario. Well, it certainly is happening and this is one of the reasons why.

"If minimum wages increased at the same rate as Canada's gross domestic product ... the minimum wage would be \$12.44 per hour.

"The campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would enable a single person working full-time in a large urban center to reach the poverty line"—as I've already said.

Contrast this, of course, with our CEOs, who are making record incomes. The average CEO of a major corporation in this country now makes \$9 million a year. "Start the clock at midnight New Year's Eve and compare Canada's best-paid CEOs to the average minimum wage earner. By the afternoon of January 2 the CEO has made as much as a full year's wages for a minimum wage earner." Again, that's not from our research department, that's from the Ontario Federation of Labour.

One of the arguments I know I'm going to hear from this assembly is about incremental increases in the minimum wage—always, I remind this assembly, keeping those wage-earners below the poverty line. What are the arguments? You always hear it's going to hurt small business. I was a small business owner. I paid a \$10 minimum wage back in the 1980s. Certainly, the minimum wage campaign saw phenomenal support from small business owners across this province.

The problem for small business owners is not the wages they pay; it's the taxes they pay. That's why I introduced a resolution in the last session to reform the business education tax. This government talks about it, but it still hasn't walked about it. That business education tax has still not been reformed. That's what TABIA and other small business organizations are asking for: tax reform.

So \$10 an hour is not an issue of small business; it's an issue of the big box stores. It's an issue of the McBusinesses, those businesses that are not home-grown, that come into our province, that pay sub-standard wages to workers, minimum wages to workers, and then take the profits outside this jurisdiction. This is forcing them to reinvest. In fact, it's good for the economy.

Other jurisdictions where they have raised the minimum wage have shown this and proven this. Santa Fe, for example, in the States raised their minimum wage 65% in one day. Did their business or economy suffer?

No. In fact, it improved. We have a petri dish around this in the States. Washington State next to Idaho: Washington pays the highest minimum wage in the States, Idaho the lowest. Guess which economy is growing and vibrant? Washington's, not Idaho's. So yes, minimum wage does affect the economy, but not in the ways that the opposition has brought forward. It actually improves the economy, because those who make minimum wage do not take vacations in the south. They do not drive cars out to the malls, because they don't have cars. They spend their money at local small business in their communities.

To increase the minimum wage across the world has been shown to help the economy. Where is minimum wage higher than it is here? In many, many places in the developing world. In the United Kingdom, it's almost C\$11; France, C\$11; Australia, C\$11; Ireland—there's a jurisdiction this government should look at if they're serious about the poverty issue; there's a jurisdiction that halved and then quartered their poverty rate. How did they do it? In part by raising the minimum wage. In Los Angeles, a worker can earn up to an \$11 minimum wage. In Santa Fe, as I've already said, it's US\$9.50 an hour. And guess what? Even in Canada, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and British Columbia all have higher minimum wages than we do in Ontario.

We in Ontario, as the United Way has so clearly and graphically shown, are now the poverty province in Canada, and Toronto is the poverty capital of Canada. How do we address this? We don't need another cabinet committee. What we do need is action. One of the actions we need right away is an immediate increase to the minimum wage to \$10 an hour.

We could talk about poverty in the more general aspect. There's material poverty, and then there is spiritual poverty—I might say spiritual bankruptcy. We have in the McGuinty government a spiritually bankrupt government. This is a government that is poor; this is a government that refuses to act on a simple request from anti-poverty organizations across this province. This is how we asked them to act: We asked them for an immediate raise to a \$10 minimum wage now, indexed to the consumer price index so that those who are working make the poverty line and are not below it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Again, it's my pleasure to speak on this bill, introduced by the member from Parkdale-High Park.

The McGuinty government is making a real difference in the lives of Ontario's lowest-paid and most vulnerable workers. We have been phasing in the minimum wage increases over the last four years. We have balanced the needs of Ontario's low-income workers with the need of Ontario's businesses to be competitive.

1110

When I was doing research to speak this morning, I found that many economists agree with our position that the minimum wage has to be phased in gradually. Now, I

don't think it takes a sophisticated economist or other professional people to come to this conclusion. During the last campaign, there was a volunteer on my campaign, Sumeet Dhir, a grade 11 student. He really put it in a good way when explaining our stand on the minimum wage issue. He explained to one of my constituents what the impact would be on a cup of coffee, on a meal at McDonald's. If you raise the minimum wage immediately by 20%, 25%, that's going to raise the cost of a meal, the cost of a cup of coffee. That really hit home, and I said that this is not a really complicated issue and think we have it right by slowly phasing in the minimum wage.

I don't know where the NDP has been for the last four years. They forget to mention that the minimum wage was frozen for nine years; not one single increase for the nine years before our government took office. We've increased the minimum wage every year, an increase of 17% since 2003.

I also want to mention that these jobs at restaurants, which generally pay minimum wage or a little bit above minimum wage, provide good experience for new immigrants. I remember my family, a lot of whom immigrated in the late 1970s and early 1980s, earning the minimum wage at that time—\$1.65, \$3.25; I don't know the exact amount. But that was a foot in the door to gain the Canadian experience that employers demand of new immigrants.

It's crucial that we phase in the minimum wage gradually. I don't see the sense of increasing the minimum wage one day and then issuing a pink slip the next day. That's essentially what this is about; that's essentially what would happen.

I think that maybe the NDP should take a page out of their counterpart's book in Manitoba, where they have decided to gradually increase the minimum wage. As a matter of fact, the member conveniently and selfishly leaves out the other 12 territories and provinces, with whom we are in line or even have a higher minimum wage than. Saskatchewan is at \$7.95. She only mentions Nunavut as one territory that has a minimum wage higher than Ontario. That's one out of so many. I'll mention Prince Edward Island—their minimum wage is \$7.50; Nova Scotia, \$7.60; Newfoundland, \$7. So we are in line, and we do have a very competitive minimum wage.

The way we're facilitating and increasing the minimum wage is the right way to go. Not just economists, as I said before, but normal people understand that. It's another poor policy that the NDP have put together. Like I said before, it's handing out a pay raise one day and giving these same people a pink slip the next. It doesn't make sense. It's for these reasons that I will not be supporting this bill.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. On the surface, the call for an immediate rise in the minimum wage to \$10 sounds, perhaps, fair. I'm sure that every one of us experiences daily circumstances within our own communities where individuals are living in poverty. The working poor are finding it more and more difficult every day to make ends meet.

However, I do not support this bill and will not, and I want to set my reasoning forward for the consideration of members. The reality is that there are businesses every day—and we tend to speak about businesses in the context of some of these debates as the evil ones, those who would want to oppress the workers of this province. Seldom is there consideration given to the fact that every day, people get up in the morning and they go to open the doors of the businesses in which they have invested every single penny of their earnings or life savings. Every single day, there are employers who do so not only for their own benefit but for the benefit of keeping others employed in their communities, and that's becoming more and more difficult as well.

The simplistic solution is not to simply say, "We will increase the minimum wage overnight and that will solve all the problems." In fact, it may well create additional problems for many others, as warned, for example, by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. It states this, and I want to read this into the record: "Immediate increase of minimum wage to \$10 an hour would significantly impact the business owners in areas such as agriculture, retail, restaurant and food services, tourism and hospitality, forcing many to lay off staff." What we don't want to do is give the province of Ontario medicine that will kill the very people it was intended to help.

I think what is needed is a very balanced approach. Quite frankly, I think the staggered implementation of an increase in the minimum wage is in fact the right thing to do. I don't defend this government very often; I have serious disagreements with their approach to managing the affairs of this province. But in this particular case, not only do I believe that a staged implementation is the appropriate way to deal with this, but I would also suggest that where the government failed was to more broadly consult with stakeholders so that we can have broader support for the rollout of this implementation.

I have to take this opportunity, while I think of it. While I disagree very much with this government many times, and I don't defend it, the comment that the member made in her debate about the spiritual bankruptcy of the government, and implying—government is the people who sit here, government is not some innate body, and I would question, what is the greater sin? Is it to be spiritually bankrupt or to be self-righteous? I think what we need to do as we have our debates here is to recognize, particularly in private members' business, that we're all here—none of us has given our lives to the calling of public service for any other reason but that we want to do what is right. We may disagree in terms of how we get there, we may disagree on the policy approach, but I don't think we should be going in the direction of making a judgment call on the motivation of the people who sit here. I think the degree to which we can at least find common ground on what the intent is, we can have a much more deliberate debate in terms of how we get there.

I want to speak very briefly to one of those sectors that the chamber of commerce mentioned, and that is the

agriculture sector, just to show members what the effect of the proposed policy is on one narrow sector of the agriculture industry, the greenhouse industry.

1120

We had representatives here last night. I think the member probably accepted her three poinsettias from the industry. Here's what that industry is facing. Ontario's greenhouse industry provides over 20,000 jobs, with a total annual payroll of \$285 million. The increase in the minimum wage immediately to \$10 for this sector will cost them an estimated \$40 million in additional payroll. Labour is the most significant component of that industry's financial statements. Forty percent of the total operating structure of that industry is payroll. If the member's proposal were to be implemented as she proposes, this industry would face not only layoffs, but I can tell you that what they'd face is the shutting down of many small businesses across the province. There may be those who say, "That's fine; that's business." No. Every shutdown of a business means that you create unemployment; not underpayment, not underemployment, but unemployment for many thousands of individuals who rely on that income.

This is only one example of one industry. The other is tourism. As a former Minister of Tourism, I can tell you that as I crossed the province—I'm sure it's the same today; in fact, the pressures are even greater today in many respects than they were a few years ago. The tourism industry and the hospitality industry are pleading with the government, and would plead with the member, not to accelerate the minimum wage because they cannot sustain that impact on their industry, given the fragile state of their industry.

What should be done? Broader consultation, I believe; staged implementation, I believe. I also believe—the member referred to it—that the government should be taking much more seriously lightening the tax burden on those businesses, not only small businesses, but small, medium and large businesses. We are one of the most highly taxed jurisdictions in the G8. That's where the relief should come from.

I believe that many businesses—as the member said herself, she was in business and she paid \$10, which was above the minimum wage, long before there was a requirement. My experience, and I'm sure that of other members as well, is that most businesses in our community are paying their employees beyond the minimum wage. The minimum wage is a backstop. But for some industries, it is survival. Because of the competitive implications of a global economy and a dollar that continues to fluctuate, nobody seems to know from one day to the next the competitive factors their businesses are facing.

In conclusion, I want to simply say that I think we are all on side with the member in terms of wanting to ensure that people in our communities can, in fact, earn a wage under which they can sustain themselves and their families—that is the objective—but I don't believe this proposal is how we're going to get there.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm rising today to speak in favour of this motion. That will probably not come as

much of a surprise to members on the government side, nor the members from the former government on the opposition side. A \$10 minimum wage is an idea whose time has come. It is an idea that has been floated for a long time, and it is one of the cornerstones of those who believe we can eradicate poverty.

If you want to eradicate poverty, you have to be able to allow people the means to do so. You cannot eradicate poverty at \$8 per hour, as the present minimum wage is. Simply do the math. If you work 40 hours a week, you make \$320; if you work 50 weeks a year, you make \$16,000. It's pretty simple: \$16,000 leaves you about \$5,000, \$6,000 or \$8,000 below the poverty line, depending on where you live in this great province of ours. So you ask people to go out there, put in a hard day and a decent day's work, and live in poverty.

There are some who think that's okay because, as the example was made, small business needs to survive, or as the example was made by my friend from Brampton West, this is an opportunity for immigrants to get their first job. Quite frankly, I reject both of those arguments. I reject those arguments because I have spoken to my constituents. Perhaps my riding is not as rich or as well off as some of the ridings of those who have already stood in their place to speak. I know that the people who have spoken to me, whether they be students struggling to get an education, whether they be new immigrants, most especially those who are women—because the majority of people who are working at the minimum wage belong to those three categories: they're young, they're new immigrants or they are women—are the people who are being forced by this government and by our Legislature to live in poverty.

If you look at where the poverty exists, and I'm speaking quite specifically about the city which I know best, the United Way says that there are 13 pockets of poverty, and one of the most persistent is in my riding. It's a place called Crescent Town. It is largely made up of young people, new immigrants, visible minorities, and women. That's who lives there, and they are poor. They constantly ask me, when I go there, to try to do something. The keenest thing that they liked in the last election was our call for a \$10 minimum wage. These are not rich people. These are people who are looking to give a hard and honest day's work but want something for themselves; they want to be lifted out of poverty by doing so.

I also have spent some time in Jane-Finch. I had an opportunity, as some of those who were in the House the last time know, to live there for nearly a week. I lived with people in Jane-Finch in public housing. It was not unique to me, because I grew up in public housing. But what was very telling is that those people who are living in poverty wanted much more—the young people who hungered for a job, who hungered for something to do, who hungered to fix up their community and live in decent surroundings, and those people looking for a decent job, a job that will lift them out of poverty, that will pay more than \$10 an hour. They are not looking to work at a place that relegates them to continuing and

ongoing poverty, a place from which they are trying to escape.

I heard the argument about small business, and yes, I am sure that there are some small businesses who would feel a cash crunch having to raise the minimum wage from \$8 to \$10. But it is not the small businesses who are telling me that this is going to be difficult. Wal-Mart Canada is telling me this is going to be difficult. McDonald's is also telling me this is going to be difficult. As the finance critic for the NDP, I can tell you that you can go on to Standard and Poor's, you can go on to the Toronto Stock Exchange or to the American stock exchange in New York and the Fortune 500, and you'll find both of those corporations. Some of the largest corporations in the world want me to continue \$8 an hour because that's what they want to pay their workers. Well, I have no time for that. I have no time for the wealthiest corporations in the entire world pressuring this government, pressuring this Legislature, and talking about keeping it at \$8 an hour. If you want to know who can afford to pay it, they can. I have no sympathy whatsoever with their arguments, and I have no sympathy with a government that continues to listen to them.

I shop every week at No Frills. That might surprise some of you. There's a wonderful man named Mr. Dickie who owns the local No Frills.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Is that where you buy all the candy?

Mr. Michael Prue: I buy some of my candy there.

He came up to me and he told me that he is very supportive of a \$10 minimum wage. He, in fact, pays his employees more than \$10 an hour, and he told me the financial difficulty he has because the government keeps it at \$8. Just down the street, one block away, Wal-Mart has just opened up a new superstore right in Scarborough, and they've hired people at \$8 an hour, and they have cut all of their prices below his. Although No Frills is a pretty cheap place to shop—that's why I shop there—you can go to Wal-Mart and get it for less. He is very angry at this because he does not want to cut the wages of his employees down to \$8 an hour so that he can compete. He wants them to pay a fair wage so that the people who work in that store don't have to go to the food bank, because that's what Wal-Mart does: Wal-Mart calls the people out and says, you know, "We're giving you a job, but here is also the address of the local food bank." It's part of their hiring policy. They tell them flat out, "What we're going to pay you isn't enough to live on." So the people in that grocery store at Wal-Mart who get \$8 an hour can't even afford to shop there. That's the reality.

1130

This government needs to do three things—and I told the new minister in a congratulations letter I sent to her that the time for study has passed. She needs to do three things immediately. If she does those three things, you can continue to study and do whatever you want.

The first one, and the most important, is to increase the minimum wage and make it a living wage. And that, to my mind, is \$10 now.

The second thing is that you need to increase Ontario Works and ODSP so that people are no longer living in poverty. Forty per cent of the people on ODSP and OW are children, but those on ODSP—and just separate that out for a minute—are people who doctors and the government agree are unable and not likely to ever work. We are continuing to leave them in unmitigated and terrible poverty throughout their entire lives because, through medical faults, none of which is their own, they cannot work. I haven't heard anything about that.

I told her, as well, to end the clawback. If ever there was a disgraceful policy of this government and the previous one, it is that one. It is the most disgraceful policy I think that has ever come out of this Legislature. For the government not to end that clawback, to continue to take the money from those poor children, is reprehensible.

I told her that after she's done those three things, she can study what she wants and this government can study what she wants because half of what will undoubtedly be recommended will already have been done.

You can study about building some affordable housing. I heard the minister the other day say that they've built 6,000 units of affordable housing. We had to go through freedom of information to find out how many were actually built, those that are under \$700 a month in rent. That is, somebody who is actually making more than \$10 an hour would pay up to \$700. How many were actually built? Two hundred and eighty-five is the answer. So the affordable housing is not affordable—not to people who earn \$8 an hour, not to people on Ontario Works and not to people on ODSP. You've built 285. That needs to be done, but study it if you need to study it.

By all means, study the dental plan, because I think you'll find that the one you've come forward with isn't enough.

In the meantime, I'm asking you to do this: I'm asking you to do what is decent, do what is right, do what is honest and allow people who work hard to earn enough money to survive. And for the edification of the member from Brampton West, I think all of those new immigrants, whom he spoke so highly of and whom I speak so highly of, would be very pleased to get a new job that paid them enough, that they in fact came to a land where they were valued and where they earned enough to feed their families.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this morning to make a few remarks on the private member's bill that's been brought forward by the member for Parkdale-High Park.

First of all, I want to recognize the mayor of Peterborough, Paul Ayotte. In the 2006 municipal campaign, one of his key planks was to put together a poverty task force in the municipality of Peterborough. Mr. Ayotte was elected and shortly after his inauguration he brought forward this task force that's been looking at a number of alternatives to address this very serious problem that we have in communities right across Ontario and indeed in my riding in Peterborough.

I would also like to compliment my colleague the member from London North Centre. All poverty groups in the province of Ontario recognize her leadership previously as the parliamentary assistant when she went around the province and put together a number of facts and suggestions. Now she's the new Minister for Children and Youth Services, a real bright light on this file, not only in Ontario but throughout Canada. She's put together a dynamic cabinet team that will be looking very closely at a number of positive suggestions that we'll be able to implement very quickly to address this issue.

In fact, as a government, over the last four years we've increased the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$8 an hour, and indeed, we've put a framework in place to move it up over the next three years to \$10.25 an hour.

It's interesting—and I listened very carefully to the third party—that indeed many anti-poverty advocates suggest that the spiral of poverty in Ontario actually started in 1993 with the Hampton-Rae government when they froze ODSP rates in 1993, compounded—

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, these are the facts—compounded by eight years of the slash-and-burn policies of the current official opposition. Those are the facts, and when you read the facts, four members, one excluded—the member from Welland, of course, got booted out of cabinet, so I can't put the blame on him—but the three other members who are currently still members of that caucus indeed rubber-stamped that decision to freeze ODSP rates in 1993. Frankly, it would be refreshing if they would stand up once in a while and apologize for that decision that was made in 1993.

That's history, and we'll move on to what we're doing. One of the key initiatives that we brought forward in our budget of spring 2007 was the Ontario child benefit. What's really interesting is that the opposition party, the third party, of course voted against that budget. But when they were asked during the campaign if they would get rid of the Ontario child benefit, no, sir. They intended to keep it in place because we know, as the late June Callwood said before her untimely death, that the Ontario child benefit is the most progressive piece of legislation and program brought in in Ontario in the last 40 years. We're proud to stand by that as it increases significantly over the next number of years, coupled with the increase in the minimum wage, coupled with the dental program we're going to bring in for low-income families. Our colleague, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, over the next little while, will be bringing forth the details of that program.

Let's look at the profile of who is receiving the minimum wage currently in Ontario: 74% are 24 years of age and younger; 54% are between the ages of 15 to 19; 37% between these ages are in school and living with their parents; 16% are between the ages of 20 and 24; 30% are 25 years of age and older; and 5% are 55 years of age and over.

I heard the member from Newmarket–Aurora talk about the hospitality industry. When we break this down

even further, we find that 30% work in the accommodation and food services sector and 34% work in the retail trade sector. Combined, 64% of minimum wage earners are in those two categories. We know that with the appreciation of the dollar, these two sectors certainly have had margins now that are very thin, and we have to recognize that a sudden dramatic increase of the minimum wage would have really serious, devastating impacts on those two particular areas.

When I have the opportunity to talk to both business and labour groups in my riding, they are fairly consistent that we're going to phase this in on an incremental basis over the next three years to \$10.25. That allows the business community to do the appropriate planning, to start to factor it into their business plans for the next three years. While some of them don't accept that, they do at least know that on an incremental basis, in March of the next three years, the minimum wage will be increased to \$10.25.

But you just can't take that policy in isolation. As a government, we're moving forward on a number of fronts, through the cabinet committee meeting, to really address poverty head-on. I would appreciate the third party—I'm sure they will be supporting the Premier of this province when we champion Ontario to look at some fundamental reform of the EI insurance fund here in Canada, which has accumulated today to some \$54 billion. We know that the current situation discriminates against Ontario, and we look forward to them standing up and supporting our Premier as we go to Ottawa to get a better deal.

1140

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to join this debate, and I congratulate Ms. Cheri DiNovo, from Parkdale–High Park, for bringing forward this legislation. Although I probably support it—the \$10 minimum wage came up, of course, after faith-based schools and 20 other issues, at all-candidate meetings in my riding, and to be consistent, I told people who attended those meetings, the local media and the public that we all want to see people earn a fair wage. But I do worry about the implementation of an immediate increase from \$8 to \$10 in the minimum wage, and so I somewhat agree with the approach the Liberal government is taking in terms of phasing it in.

My family ran small businesses all my life. We owned a tavern in Loretto, Ontario, and a general store, and my father owned appliance stores in Alliston and Newmarket and Barrie prior to that. We certainly know what it's like to meet a payroll and to have the bank knocking on the door when you can't meet your payroll, and we certainly know what it's like to be in small business.

When Mr. Sorbara was finance minister and this issue first came forward from the NDP in a forceful way, I did tend to agree with his comments. Our first jobs as kids in Alliston—you could either work in the Alliston Dairy Queen or the Alliston IGA, and I worked in the Alliston IGA for four and a half years. Back in those days, all our mailboxes fit on one wall in the local post office, and I think we had 850 people actually registered in the town

of Alliston, and now, in the whole area of New Tecumseth, there are some 22,000. So a lot has changed in the last 30 years.

But I note that Mr. Sorbara said that most of the people on minimum wage tend to be either new Canadians or students. In fact, I pulled Morley Gunderson's February 2007 report out of the library, and he points out exactly that: First of all, a very small percentage of the workforce is actually on minimum wage, and again, they tend to be students and new Canadians, people trying to get their foot in the door, maybe the first time, into the Ontario—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Entry-level wages.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Entry-level wages. Thank you very much, I say to my colleague from Halton.

Fifty per cent of minimum wage workers are teens or youths who live with their parents and 31.4% are couples. But in that group, almost 70% have spouses who are employed in jobs above the minimum wage.

Canadian evidence suggests that a 10% increase in the minimum wage is likely to reduce the employment of teens by 3% to 6%, and there's further evidence that if you did an increase as large as what is proposed by the honourable member, you might see reductions between 7.5% and 15% in teen employment.

Again, my worry would be that if we did such a large jump—over a 25% increase—jobs would immediately be lost, and that would be unfortunate. The greatest dignity you can give a human being is the opportunity for employment. That's what I believe, and I spent my years in university studying those issues.

Finally, I think John Tory had a good suggestion, which he indicated both in this House and in an op-ed piece or letter to the editor in the Toronto papers a few months back: We should really set up an independent commission, bring social activists, students, large and small employers and government together, and try to take this whole issue out of the political arena. It seems to me, in my 17 years here, that it comes up every year. It's a political football. The government is always on the defensive whenever the issue comes up. There is not a lot of science that goes into it. I note that this would bring Ontario to among the top, if not the top, minimum wages in the country, which would make us uncompetitive, once again at a time of huge job losses, including 1,000 manufacturing job losses in my riding of Simcoe—Grey and the Collingwood area over the last 18 months.

I don't want to see more people out of work, and I want to see opportunities for young people to have jobs. I'm the critic for training, colleges and universities, and certainly, in meeting with students on a regular basis, they don't have the employment opportunities I had when I went to the University of Toronto. I was employed here. I started as a driver for a cabinet minister, and worked at two of the libraries at the university. I was a bar bouncer at the local pub at the university. There were tons and tons of jobs for students back in the mid-1980s, and they don't have those same opportunities, and tuition fees have gone through the roof since then. So I

just say to the honorable member that I appreciate her passion for this issue and her party's passion for it, but you need to bring in some common sense.

I also represent an agricultural community where this would be devastating if it came in overnight and the agricultural wage was adjusted accordingly. They just had a celebration for Jamaican workers in my riding, who do a lot of the work. They had a recognition celebration for them at Blue Mountain recently. Certainly, while I'm sure they'd all like a higher wage, they also appreciate the jobs. They come here from other countries to help us out in our agricultural sector.

With that, I wish the honorable member good luck and congratulate her on her re-election.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague Ms. Cheri DiNovo, MPP for Parkdale—High Park, and her Bill 7, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour—now. When you work full-time at minimum wage, you make \$16,000 a year. If we give you an increase to ten bucks an hour, you will make \$20,000 a year. You'll be barely above poverty.

People will have you believe that it is students living at home who work for those wages. This is not the case. Sure, there are students, but they are students who work to pay for their tuition. There are young families with children who work for those wages and there are new immigrants working for those wages. But they are mainly women and they are women with families working for \$16,000 to \$20,000 a year, if they're lucky enough to work full-time.

I'm proud to say that the city of Greater Sudbury passed a unanimous motion to call on this government for a \$10-an-hour minimum wage right now. I'd like to thank Councillor Claude Berthiaume, who brought that forward to our municipality. I'm also proud to say that 52 other municipalities in Ontario have passed motions asking for an increase of the minimum wage to \$10 an hour now. How can 52 municipalities in Ontario, United Ways and the Association of Ontario Health Centres all have it wrong?

People will have you believe that doom and gloom will happen. This is working on our ignorance. The research papers are there. The economists who have lived through an increase of the same magnitude, about a 25% increase in minimum wage, have shown that this is not the case. The doom and gloom, the loss of jobs, the massive layoffs—none of this happened. What really happens is that you lift a poor family out of poverty. This is something that this government should do.

I would also like to correct my colleague there, Jeff Leal, who thinks that the government is not clawing back the national child benefit. I say that you should talk to a few families on OW, Ontario Works, or on ODSP. They know that the clawback is happening because they lose that money every month.

Je suis fière d'être ici aujourd'hui pour appuyer ma collègue, M^{me} Cheri DiNovo, qui essaie de modifier la loi pour faire augmenter le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de

l'heure tout de suite. Une famille qui travaille au salaire minimum en ce moment fait 16 000 \$ par année. À 10 \$ de l'heure, ça va augmenter à 20 000 \$ par année. Les gens voudraient nous faire croire que ceux qui travaillent au salaire minimum sont les étudiants qui veulent se payer des gâteries, mais ce n'est pas ça du tout. La vraie réalité, c'est que oui, ce sont des étudiants qui essaient de payer leurs études, mais aussi ce sont des jeunes familles avec des enfants, des nouveaux arrivants en Ontario, mais surtout ce sont des femmes avec des enfants qui vivent dans la pauvreté.

Si on augmente le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure, ces gens-là, leur vie va changer. Je suis très fière de la ville de Sudbury, qui a passé une proposition de façon unanime pour faire augmenter le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure maintenant. Saviez-vous qu'il y a également 52 municipalités en Ontario qui ont passé la même proposition, qui demande au gouvernement de faire augmenter le salaire minimum à 10 \$ de l'heure maintenant?

Comment ça se fait qu'il y a 52 municipalités qui demandent ça, que Centraide demande la même chose, que l'Association des centres de santé de l'Ontario demande la même chose? C'est parce que la recherche a été faite. Le désastre, le cataclysme, les pertes d'emplois massives—tout ça, ce sont des tactiques pour nous faire peur. Ce qui va vraiment arriver—les économistes ont fait leur travail—c'est qu'on va sortir les gens de la pauvreté. Ça, c'est quelque chose que le gouvernement doit faire tout de suite.

1150

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to say I'm happy to join in this debate on the bill moved by the member from Parkdale-High Park.

Most of us have just gotten out of an election campaign, and all of us have had the opportunity to speak to our constituents and the small businesses in our area. I just want to share with you some of the thoughts that these businesses have passed on to me. A lot of the small businesses said that they don't support the request by the NDP for an immediate increase of the minimum wage to \$10, for the one reason that it would immediately create a domino effect in their business. The person who is making minimum wage today going to \$10 would mean that the person who is making \$10 would have to go to \$12, etc.

What that would mean to them is an immediate change in their profit margin and they would have to look at price increases for all the things they deal with. I think none of us have really considered that effect on business. At the end of the road, what you will see is that a business will actually terminate the employment of some of their employees and we would have higher unemployment.

Many years ago when I worked in the private sector, I was preached upon many times that money is not a motivator. It is a temporary motivator. So that when you get something, it only lasts for so long.

I will share with you an experience that I had in the recent election. I was in a debate at a high school during

the last election and the NDP candidate harped on the issue of the \$10 minimum wage. There was a complete roar from the students in the school, and I thought, I'm in trouble because all the students support this particular issue. Unfortunately, when the student vote took place on election day and the results came out, I came out ahead of the NDP candidate. I was totally surprised.

About a week later, I met with some of the students in my office because they were asking me to come back to the school. I did ask the question, "There was this huge uproar when the NDP candidate raised the issue of the \$10 minimum wage. Can you tell me why it is the vote might have gone the way it did?" I was actually told by every one of the five students meeting with me, "Mr. Balkissoon, we support your government because we believe you have presented to us in the entire debate a very balanced approach to running government and business and the people, education and housing and daycare. This is why many of us students supported your position."

So I say our government has embarked on an incremental way of increasing the minimum wage. We believe it's the best way to do it. We also believe that the minimum wage is not the issue facing poverty; it's a much more complex problem. Our government, through the Minister of Children and Youth Services, has a cabinet committee that is going to deal with this complex issue.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to all of the honourable members for all of your input. I want to address a few issues.

First and foremost, the jury is in. Over 20 studies have been done, and these are not computer model studies. These are studies of actual jurisdictional experiences where the minimum wage has been raised—in some cases, as in Santa Fe, where they raised it 65% overnight, raised substantially, more in fact than we're asking for with this bill. All of those studies show that it does not lead to unemployment; it does not lead to increased bankruptcies. In fact, it leads to a healthier economy. Again, I talked about a number of jurisdictions. The United Kingdom: They clearly didn't suffer. Ireland did not suffer when they raised their minimum wage to about C\$11 an hour. And there are others. We could go on—Australia, another one as well.

We live here in Toronto, in Ontario, in the most expensive city in Canada. So the fact that we could be trailblazers in terms of a living wage—that doesn't upset me, that encourages me. Thirty-three per cent of our food bank users are working poor, working families. One in six children in Ontario live in poverty, one in four families in Toronto live in poverty, and one in two families headed by a single parent live in poverty. This is the backdrop for this discussion. We are not having this discussion in a vacuum; we are having this discussion in the face of those who work 40 hours a week and then have to use a food bank and can't pay their rent at the end of the month. These are the people, polls have shown in our own province, who overwhelmingly favour a raise to the \$10 minimum wage immediately. And that's not enough; that's just the beginning.

As to the member who talked about an incremental increase, I wish we had put that into effect when we raised our own salaries 25% in this House in eight days. We're asking for the same consideration for the poorest families among us, the same consideration you showed yourselves to the poorest working families in this province.

Let me be very clear: If this bill is defeated this day, the McGuinty government is immediately condemning 257,000 to continue to live in poverty—those who make \$8 right now—and up to another million who make under \$10 or \$10 on the nose. That's who they're condemning to poverty with this action.

So I ask you again, please support this bill. Break ranks. Be the one who stands for justice and against the common. Do the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for private members' public business having expired, we shall now deal with ballot item number 1, standing in the name of Mr. Miller.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(WAGE SECURITY), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (SÉCURITÉ SALARIALE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Miller has moved second reading of Bill 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to committee—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member has asked that consent be given to send the bill to the standing committee on general government. Agreed? Agreed.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(RAISING THE MINIMUM WAGE), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (AUGMENTATION DU SALAIRE MINIMUM)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 7. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1203.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Gélinas, France
Hampton, Howard

Horwath, Andrea
Kormos, Peter
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul

Prue, Michael
Ruprecht, Tony
Tabuns, Peter

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brownell, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Gerretsen, John
Hardeman, Ernie
Hoy, Pat
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza

Naqvi, Yasir
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Shuman, Peter
Smith, Monique
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilkinson, John
Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 33.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members' statements. The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I'd just remind all the visitors and guests here in the Legislature today that you are welcome to observe, but I ask that you not partake in applause or cheering. That is left for the 106 members on the floor. If it does persist, I would have to clear the chamber. So I welcome everybody—it's a pleasure to have you here—but we need to make sure we follow the standing orders.

The floor is yours.

ONTARIO LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Randy Hillier: On behalf of my constituents, I extend congratulations on your election to the Speaker's chair.

I would like to welcome and extend my appreciation to the many members of the Ontario Landowners Asso-

ciation who have travelled from across this province to attend today's proceedings. They started as a group of four people around a kitchen table in Lanark county. They are now a province-wide association 20 chapters strong.

The OLA promotes the principles of democracy, natural justice and strong local government, and represents the interests of the rural community. These people are the heart and soul of Ontario. Their honesty, determination, self reliance and independent lifestyles represent the true heritage and our unique culture here in Ontario. They also know that the true role of government is to prevent injustice, not to create it. It is an organization I know well, made up of farmers, loggers and small business operators; people who earn a living from their lands and who are the foundation of their communities.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming the people of rural Ontario into their House here at Queen's Park.

HOLIDAY SEASON IN ETOBICOKE-LAKESHORE

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Winter is definitely in the air in Ontario, and with the start of winter comes the rush of the holiday season. But in spite of this busy time of year, my community of Etobicoke-Lakeshore has not slowed down at all. In fact, it's working just as hard as always to make sure that the holiday season is enjoyed by all.

I want to take the opportunity today to thank the many organizations and volunteers in Etobicoke-Lakeshore that work hard all year long, and especially at this time of year, to bring the festive season to our neighbourhoods.

First of all, I want to thank, under the leadership of Liz Porritt and her team, our annual Etobicoke Santa Claus parade on the Lakeshore, again a great success last weekend. Thousands came out to enjoy the day by taking part in the parade or watching along the parade route, and everyone enjoyed a day of music by local bands, decorative floats, of course, and the grand finale of Santa Claus, affectionately known as Ho-Ho around my house.

As well, our local BIAs and residents' associations are always very active in bringing the joy of the season to us, including the Kingsway BIA, which presented the cavalcade of lights. As well as the Mimico BIA and the Mimico Residents Association hosted a tree lighting at Storefront Humber, under the leadership of Bob Polden and his team. Tonight, we will see the Village of Islington BIA's tree lighting ceremony at Dundas and Burnhamthorpe.

The holiday season in our community is extremely successful because of the hard work of dedicated community groups and volunteers. On behalf of my community, I say thank you and happy holidays.

LIVEABLE COMMUNITIES AWARD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Over the years I have always maintained that great things are happening in Oshawa.

Today I'd like to pay a special tribute to the community of Oshawa for recently receiving an international award of recognition. Just last week, the city of Oshawa achieved a gold award at the 2007 International Awards for Liveable Communities in a review held in London, England. Municipalities which receive this award are recognized as being in the top 15% of sustainable and liveable communities worldwide. In addition, Oshawa placed third in its population category for cities of 75,000 to 200,000 people. The delegation from Oshawa presented before a renowned international panel along with 50 other countries.

The Liveable Communities Awards are backed by the United Nations Environment Programme and focus on the enhancement of the environment and the quality of life in the community. The panel's criteria consisted of community sustainability, healthy lifestyles, environmental practices, heritage, landscape enhancement and planning for the future. I am proud that our community of Oshawa is able to stand out on the world stage and be recognized for its dedication to these practices and its vision for the future.

This truly is a testament to the prudent people of Oshawa, community leaders and associates. I am proud and honoured to be able to work together with such resourceful partners to build a sustainable community for present and future generations. Congratulations once again to His Worship Mayor John Gray, city council and to our great city of Oshawa for achieving such a prestigious award.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure it would shock people to know that the McGuinty government is breaching Ontario's Environmental Bill of Rights. The Ministry of the Environment has failed to meet crucial deadlines for responding to concerns about industrial smog in Hamilton.

Thanks to the diligent efforts of Environment Hamilton in partnership with north Hamilton residents, the government's failure to follow the rules is not going unchecked. This dedicated group used the Environmental Bill of Rights to ask the ministry to review provincial operating certificates for the ArcelorMittal KOBM melt shop. By law, provincial ministries have 60 days to respond to applications for reviews made under the Environmental Bill of Rights; the ministry's deadline for responding to this complaint was September 4. Here it is, three months later, still no compliance.

This is very frustrating for the people of Hamilton who care very deeply about the environment and deserve strong government support and action to clean up the ongoing air quality problems. It should send a disturbing signal to the entire province that this government is asleep at the switch on environmental files. I would like to commend Lynda Lukasik, Lorna Moreau, Environment Hamilton and all the residents who, like me, are

committed to pushing the McGuinty government to the wall for environmental action on our concerns.

Hamilton has been rained on by greasy soot. Its waterways were poisoned a toxic chemical fire that this government refuses to investigate. The damaging industrial air pollution is thick while the powers that be turn their backs. I implore the government to finally act.

BRAMPTON HOSPITAL

Mr. Vic Dhillon: On October 28 of this year, a long-awaited dream of Bramptonians became a reality, and that was the opening of Brampton Civic Hospital. Hospitals are the cornerstones of communities, and no community understands that better than Brampton.

Building a brand-new hospital is rare for any community. I would like to take this opportunity to thank those involved, including the Osler board, Osler staff, physicians, nurses, volunteers, foundation members, Minister Smitherman, my colleagues in Brampton, members of the LHIN and, last but not least, the community for all their hard work and support throughout the years. Together we did what we dreamt we could do, and I could not be prouder.

But our work is not done. Our government recognizes that the health care needs of Brampton and Peel are growing, and that is why this government, this minister and all of my colleagues in Brampton have been and will be committed to the redevelopment process of Peel Memorial Hospital. My colleagues from Brampton and I will work hard with this government and the minister, but we can't do it alone. That is why I would like to encourage all Brampton residents to participate in the Central West LHIN's public consultation process for Peel Memorial Hospital. Your direct participation in this process will help shape the programs and services in both hospitals that will ultimately result in better health care for all of us.

I would like to once again thank the community, its stakeholders and the minister for their ongoing leadership and commitment to health care in Brampton.

1340

FAMILY FRIENDLY REFORMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No one in this place, regardless of gender or political affiliation, should have to choose between being an effective representative in this place and being a good parent. Unfortunately, that choice is often before the members of this assembly.

This place was created over 200 years ago, long before women had the right to vote, long before men took on greater parenting roles, and long before the diversity of this great province was reflected in this Legislature. That's why I have been relentless in calling for family friendly reforms at Queen's Park. Our families make sacrifices for the Ontario of tomorrow, as much as we do. It's time we recognize that.

All corners of this House have advanced ideas: reducing evening sittings, bringing a daycare and a prayer room on-site, and creating a spousal association.

My dad was a politician for three decades before he died. He taught me a very valuable lesson. He said, "You'll inherit a constituency, and it's your job to make it a better place than when you received it." That holds true for 107 members in this Legislative Assembly, who are blessed to hold a seat in the 39th Parliament. While it means that we must make our communities a better place, it also places a duty on us to modernize this Legislature, while respecting its traditions. We are the stewards of this House, and I urge all members to support this resolution later today.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Over the past few weeks, I had the opportunity to meet with trustees and staff from the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board to discuss the progress we have made in our education system and the challenges that we face in the future.

As a former educator, I know first-hand about the importance of investing in education in order to create a highly skilled society. That is why I rise today to commend our government on the new investments in education announced in the throne speech.

In my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, households with young children will benefit from our government's plan to work toward full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. Full-day learning will ensure that hard-working parents have access to quality child care for their children at an earlier age.

Our government is also willing to continue to improve the funding formula and invest an additional \$3.1 billion annually in our schools.

I would like to congratulate the trustees and staff at the Peel District School Board and Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board for choosing to work with our government in a spirit of co-operation and mutual respect. I look forward to working with both school boards to ensure that we have the best possible education system.

QUILT OF BELONGING

Mr. Jim Brownell: As many of you know, I take great pride in the ethnic diversity of my largely rural riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Today, I would like to speak about an art project that was produced in my riding that perfectly symbolizes this cultural mix so characteristic of both Ontario and Canada.

It is called the Quilt of Belonging, and it is a tapestry that was started after a local group of artists, under the leadership of Esther Bryan, learned that there is at least one person from every country in the world living in Canada. The tapestry contains almost 300 beautifully embroidered blocks, each weaving the story of the cultural or ethnic group it represents.

With the help of hundreds of staff and volunteers from across Canada, the tapestry took five years to complete—truly a labour of love. I had the opportunity to view this masterpiece last spring in my riding, and I can tell you that it is magnificent.

After a brilliant launch at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa-Hull, the Quilt of Belonging has toured the country and is now being enjoyed by people around the world. The people of Houston, Texas, were so impressed that their mayor, Bill White, proclaimed October 31 of this year Quilt of Belonging Day in that city.

The piece has touched many on its tour so far, with its ability to bring to life both our own heritage and that of our fellow citizens. It celebrates the cultural richness of the riding, the province and the country.

When the Quilt of Belonging finally settles after its tour, I encourage you to enjoy this remarkable piece that is original to Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry but is destined to become a cultural touchstone for all Ontarians.

HANUKKAH

Mr. David Zimmer: Today is the second day of Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights. Hanukkah commemorates the religious and military victory of the Jewish people against the Assyrian oppressors some 2,000 years ago. At that time, Jews in Judea, now Israel, were forbidden to practise their religion under Assyrian occupation. Although vastly outnumbered, the Jewish people, led by Judah Maccabee and his four brothers, rose up and fought against King Antiochus and his army. After three years of fighting, the Maccabeus reclaimed the holy temple in Jerusalem.

Tradition holds that when the Maccabeus entered the holy temple, they found only enough oil to light the menorah, the most important object in the temple, for one day. However, when the Maccabeus lit the menorah, it burned not for one day, but for eight days. Today, Jews around the world continue to celebrate this miracle through prayers and the lighting of the menorah on eight consecutive days. The light of the menorah has come to symbolize freedom, religious tolerance and peace, something all of us in Ontario value.

On behalf of the Ontario government, I would like to take this opportunity to wish the Jewish community of Ontario a very happy Hanukkah celebration.

WEARING OF T-SHIRTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This afternoon, we are privileged to have members of the Ontario Landowners' Association in the galleries. I rise today to seek unanimous consent of this House that those present be permitted to wear their distinctive shirts that signify their membership in this very important organization. I seek unanimous consent that they be permitted to do so today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hillier is seeking unanimous consent of the House for his guests to wear their T-shirts. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce my mother-in-law and father-in-law, who are in the west gallery. My mother-in-law is celebrating her birthday today, so could we welcome them to the House?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome, and happy birthday to you.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I ask for unanimous consent to wear white ribbons for the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton Mountain seeks consent of the House to wear white ribbons. Agreed? Agreed.

The member from Sault Ste. Marie on a point of order.

Mr. David Oraziatti: No, Speaker, not on a point of order; to introduce a bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Toronto-Davenport—no, Toronto-Danforth.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I too will get a T-shirt, Mr. Speaker—with my riding on it.

I rise to welcome Wolfe Erlichmann from Frontenac and Donna Dillman, on the 60th day of her hunger strike against a uranium mine in Frontenac. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome again.

VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I would like members to warmly welcome a group of people who are in the forefront of mitigating climate change. In fact, they are establishing the Climate Project-Canada, the Canadian arm of Al Gore's global Climate Project. They are Shelley Kath, Georgina Bencsik, Michael Homsie, Ric Cuthbertson and our very own George Chuvalo, who in his fight against drugs should also be congratulated.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would agree with the member and thank him for introducing his guests.

A special welcome to George Chuvalo, a great Canadian and somebody that we can all be very proud of. Mr. Chuvalo, as we know, has been involved in a number of initiatives over the years. I've had the opportunity to meet him in the past. My mother grew up here in Toronto and he lived next door to my mother. His family didn't have a television in the 1950s. My mother's family had a television, and George Chuvalo used to come over and watch the fights with my grandfather. He remembered

that when I spoke with him earlier today. It's a real honour to have you here today, George.

Applause.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH FROM SECOND-HAND SMOKE IN AUTOMOBILES ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 VISANT À PROTÉGER LES ENFANTS ET LES JEUNES CONTRE LA FUMÉE SECONDAIRE DANS LES AUTOMOBILES

Mr. Oraziotti moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to protect children and youth from second-hand smoke in motor vehicles / Projet de loi 11, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée afin de protéger les enfants et les jeunes contre la fumée secondaire dans les véhicules automobiles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Oraziotti: The bill seeks to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to prohibit smoking in vehicles when a person who is less than 16 years of age is present.

The objective is to protect children and youth from intense levels of second-hand smoke. Research shows that children are especially susceptible to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and are more likely to suffer from cancer, heart disease, asthma and a number of other respiratory illnesses. Each hour that a child is exposed to second-hand smoke in a car is equivalent to the child smoking a pack of cigarettes.

An Ipsos Reid poll today indicated that 80% of Ontarians support this type of legislation. I want to thank leading health care advocates in Ontario for being here today and for expressing their strong support for the bill. Hopefully, members of the Legislature will support it as well.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We've got a couple of guests that I'd like to introduce: first, a member of the 36th Parliament from the riding of Prince Edward—Lennox—South Hastings, Gary Fox.

Mr. Fox, welcome back to Queen's Park.

Also, we'd like to recognize His Worship Sam Sullivan, Mayor of Vancouver, who is here today. He's been in Toronto to promote the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and the 2010 Paralympics.

Your Worship, welcome to Queen's Park.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Statements by the ministry? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today we mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. All across our province and across Canada, people are mourning the tragic and senseless loss of 14 young women who were killed simply because they were women.

It is also a day of awareness to highlight the struggle of women and girls who are living with violence right now. Although it has been almost 20 years since this horrific tragedy, we know that violence is still very much a part of women's lives.

According to the latest Statistics Canada survey, seven per cent of Ontario women reported having experienced violence at the hands of their spouses in the previous five years. As well, more than one third of Canadian women report having had at least one experience of sexual assault since the age of 16.

This is simply unacceptable. Preventing violence against women requires families, friends and neighbours, governments, and communities working together to eliminate this problem. We all have a responsibility in preventing violence against women.

The McGuinty government is doing its part. Last month was Woman Abuse Prevention Month, and our government reaffirmed its commitment to preventing violence against women. Last year, our government spent \$190 million in violence against women services and prevention programs. This includes more than \$82 million in new funding under the domestic violence action plan. We're providing better community-based supports, implementing education and training strategies, strengthening our justice systems and providing better access for the francophone community.

For many people, it is not just understanding what they are seeing, but also knowing what to do to offer help to a person in need. With funding from our government, the Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign is aiming to change people's attitudes so that everyone, whether family, friend or workmate, can recognize abuse and respond appropriately. The campaign, I'm happy to say, has been launched in more than 70 communities, with more launches planned in the coming year. I urge everyone to check out the website www.neighboursfriendsandfamilies.ca to find more information on this very important program.

Of course, we know there is more to do. As the minister responsible for women's issues, I will continue to build on the domestic violence action plan in collaboration with our community partners. Our government has committed to increase funding to shelters, second-stage

housing, sexual assault centres and to develop a co-ordinated plan to target sexual violence.

Since 1991, the YWCA has also distributed rose buttons on December 6 to mark the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women and to honour the 14 young women who were killed in Montreal.

The White Ribbon Campaign, established in 1991, is a symbol of men's opposition to men's violence against women. Each year around this time, men and boys are urged to wear a white ribbon for the campaign. I have rose buttons and white ribbons with me today, and I invite all members to wear them to demonstrate their commitment to ending violence against women.

We must be constant in our actions and diligent in our efforts year-round. The McGuinty government and its partners have worked hard to provide the supports that women need to be safe and secure. I can assure you that our government will continue to take action to prevent violence against women, to help make a better future for women and children—and men—in Ontario.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Just to clarify, the previous statement was not a statement from the ministry. Rather, I would ask for unanimous consent for a member from each party to speak for up to five minutes regarding the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women—given that a government member has spoken, beginning with the official opposition and the third party.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member has asked for unanimous consent for all members to speak for up to five minutes. Agreed? Agreed.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to share my time with my colleague the honourable member from Dufferin—Caledon.

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus on this, the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Declared by Parliament in 1991, this day was selected because it was the day on which the terrible events occurred at the Université de Montréal's École Polytechnique. This is the 18th anniversary of the day that 14 young, intelligent women, full of life and promise for the future, were hunted down, separated from their male colleagues, and murdered, just because they were women. They were murdered by a young man who said he hated feminists and felt that women had deprived him of the place, both at the university and in society, that he felt he deserved.

It's important to take the time today for sober reflection: first, to remember the young women who died and their families who have had to carry on without them, never to see them graduate, marry, have children or have careers. We must support them and honour the memory of their daughters, sisters and friends by working diligently to end violence against women.

Secondly, it is a day to consider the huge ripple effect that violence against women has on our society, both socially and financially. Violence is a major factor in

women's health and well-being. The measurable health-related costs of violence against women in Canada exceed \$1.5 billion a year. These costs include short-term medical and dental treatment for injuries, long-term physical and psychological care, lost time at work, and use of transition homes and crisis centres.

The financial consequences are significant, but it should be remembered that they're only the tip of the iceberg when you think about the effect upon the children whose lives have been touched by violence against women.

1400

Think about May-Isles, Gillian Hadley and other women killed by their partners and the children who have been left motherless. Think about the children who witness violence against their mothers in their homes. A few chilling statistics: In 2004, 33% of all victims of spousal violence reported that children saw or heard violence in the home. Children who witness family violence often display elevated rates of depression, aggression, delinquency and other emotional problems. Witnessing violence increases the chances that boys will grow up to act violently with girlfriends, wives and partners. For girls, it increases the chances that they will experience violence in their dating and/or marital relationships. In fact, Marc Lépine, the young man who killed the young women on December 6, 18 years ago, was himself a witness to violence against his mother at the hands of his father, and suffered physical abuse himself.

We need to do what we can to stop this cycle of violence against women with concrete, measurable solutions. My colleague the member from Durham has proposed a private member's bill that would give victims of domestic violence access to emergency intervention orders 24 hours a day. These orders would have the power to restrict someone who is threatening or harassing a former domestic partner from contacting the partner or their family. This is one example of a measure that could be adopted quickly by this Legislature that could make a real difference in saving a life.

I urge all members to support this bill and to consider other measures that we could take to prevent these needless tragedies. There's no better way to honour the memory of those 14 young women.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would also like to join my colleague from Whitby—Oshawa in marking the Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women, and with it share some good news with the House.

In my riding of Dufferin—Caledon, a shelter, Family Transition Place, has been running a very successful and highly sought-after program in our local schools to stop the cycle of violence. The violence prevention team, run by two incredibly driven young people, Tracy and Travis, runs programs in elementary and high schools throughout Dufferin and Caledon on empowerment, bullying and positive relationships. The proactive work that Family Transition Place is doing in our community and with our young people trying to stop the cycle of abuse before it begins is incredible.

The response in the schools has been tremendous. Family Transition Place is booking literally months ahead for the programs, because principals, teachers and students have seen how well it works.

On a day when we remember many tragic stories, it is important that we acknowledge how organizations such as Family Transition Place are making a difference in the lives of our children and in our community through such programs.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm honoured and privileged—I'm one of the few women in this chamber that's honoured and privileged to be able to speak about this and to this issue. I'll remind everyone here, men and women, who are lucky enough to be here and privileged enough to be here, that we speak on behalf of many who are brutalized.

And we're speaking about many: One in three women in Ontario have been assaulted. This is a startling and absolutely appalling statistic. There are others: For every second that we speak in this House, another woman in Ontario is being assaulted. Between 1995 and 2005, 231 women in Ontario were murdered by their partners or their former partners. Between January and November 2006, there were 24 women and 12 children murdered again by their partners or their former partners. Across Canada, 100,000 women and children use shelters to escape from abuse. This is a huge population move, and it has certainly caught the United Nations' attention.

I particularly want to remember with respect the family of Jocelyn Dulan, a young Filipino caregiver who was murdered in the home of the family that she worked for. We still don't have an answer for that crime. In fact, we in the New Democratic Party are calling for a public inquiry into her death, and also for immediate and random inspections of the homes where many young women act as caregivers.

The Step It Up campaign and others have rooted violence against women in the fact that women are still unequal. The seeds of inequality are sown, in part, here. The United Way has shown that poverty wears a woman's face in this province. It wears a woman's face in this city. We know that one in two single-parent families are living in poverty. They are the families of women without partners living in poverty. There are several aspects to this problem and there are several aspects to the solution. Let's start with the solution.

First of all, we need child care. We don't have child care in this province. Only one in 10 children has a space in child care; it costs on average over \$1,000. In Quebec, by contrast, you can get quality child care for \$7 a day.

Lack of housing keeps women unequal, lack of transitional housing keeps women unequal, and we have a lack of housing. We have over 75,000 households waiting in the GTA alone for housing, many of them women trying to escape from abusive households, who can't escape from abusive households because there is nowhere to go.

We remember women who were killed in Montreal. Let us not sow more seeds of violence for the next

generations to come. When we talk about remembering women, that's exactly what we're doing. We're bringing back all of those stories of those women murdered, those women abused, those women assaulted. We're bringing those stories back. Those women are with us now as we speak about this.

If we really want to honour their memories, if we really want to do something about it so that it doesn't happen again, then we have to act. Today I'm sad to report that one of the ways in which we could have acted was to pass a \$10 minimum wage bill now. A bill that would have affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of women across this province was defeated by the McGuinty government. It was defeated this morning. That is going to affect women's lives, that is going to keep inequality going and that's going to keep women who are in abusive situations in abusive situations. These are sad, sad times and we ask, instead of flowery words and sentiments from the government, for action.

I also want to mention the names of the women who are coming here today from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses to submit a petition to the House to demand more housing. They have 600 signatures. These are the women who will be joining us shortly: Ms. Linton, Ms. Pettiford, Ms. McFarlane, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Smith, Ms. Lewis, Ms. Afm, Ms. Turnbull and their executive director, Eileen Morrow. They will speak with one voice, and that voice is for a solution to violence against women, not just more sentiment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members and all guests of the Legislature today to please rise as we observe a moment of silence for the national Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

RELEASE OF PSYCHIATRIC OFFENDER

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Health, of which he already has informal notice. It has to do with Mr. Jeffrey Arenburg. Mr. Arenburg is a diagnosed paranoid schizophrenic who was found not criminally responsible for the 1995 murder of Brian Smith, a sportscaster with CJOH television in Ottawa.

Last year, Mr. Arenburg was given an absolute discharge from the province's mental health system, and last week he was arrested in Buffalo for the alleged assault of a US border guard. This has justifiably set off alarm bells in Ottawa.

Minister, can you assure people in Ottawa and other areas of the province that when Mr. Arenburg returns to Ontario, as he surely will, he will pose no threat to public safety?

1410

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the Ontario Review Board is actually set up under a federal statute, the Criminal Code. The composition of the board is dictated by a federal statute, the Criminal Code. The process when somebody is found not criminally responsible for an offence, which the statute defines as being "exempt from criminal responsibility," is set out in the Criminal Code. The review process and the potential dispositions—an absolute discharge, a conditional discharge or continued detention in a hospital—are set out in the Criminal Code.

When the individual came before the review board for the hearing, the crown attorney took the position that the crown objected to an absolute discharge. The independent tribunal made a different decision.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't question the independence of the tribunal. They are Ontario order-in-council appointments to that board.

Media reports on this issue indicate that the review board, in its decision to give Mr. Arenburg an absolute discharge, suggested there was a 24% chance he would re-offend within 10 years. I'm not sure if that means once every four weeks or once every four years, but I do know that the risk-management tool used in these cases has a significant error rate.

Minister, do you believe it's in the best interests of public safety to release someone without conditions or restrictions, someone responsible for a cold-blooded murder, when there is a 24% chance the individual will re-offend? Do you agree with that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: In fact, the crown who made representations before the review board took the position that such a disposition should not take place. The independent review board set up under the federal Criminal Code, exercising its own judgment, took a different position. That review board consists of the types of professionals that the federal government mandates through the Criminal Code.

It sounds like the Leader of the Opposition's real objection is with the potential for an absolute discharge for someone found not criminally responsible for the type of acts he outlined, in which case his objection is to the Minister of Justice. You know where he is. You should contact him and call for an amendment to the Criminal Code.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's another example of the blame game that this government is so proficient in.

The reality is—and the minister may want to refer this to the Minister of Health—Mr. Arenburg is going to come back into Ontario, and it looks like all we can do is cross our fingers and hope he doesn't re-offend. If the minister—and I'm talking about the Minister of Health, essentially—doesn't have the legislative authority to act, I ask if he would consider, on an expedited basis, regulatory and/or legislative changes under the Mental Health Act that would give the province the ability through

community treatment orders to address public safety concerns and do it in a way that doesn't infringe on individual rights. It should be possible and could potentially address the Arenburg situation and others that may come forward in the future. Will you do that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Attorney General and the crown will not comment on the process with respect to any individual or individual case. There are tools within our statutes, some of which we administer for the federal government through the Criminal Code, some of which are provincial statutes, that provide for protections. The police will investigate thoroughly, and the crown's office will pursue where public safety is at issue.

But I repeat to the member, who obviously is in full voice today, that if he objects to the type of disposition that was made in this case, his real objection is with the form of the statute. It's a federal statute. Pick up the phone and call the Minister of Justice.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Is he not here today?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment, please. He's not here. Restart the clock, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: If the minister is not here, I will direct it to the Premier.

Premier, since the Minister of Finance is refusing our call to call in the Auditor General to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the Ontario Financing Authority's irresponsible handling of public funds, will you please, then, advise the House what your minister is doing, first, to investigate how it came to be that the board of directors of the Ontario Financing Authority approved investing public funds in this high-risk paper; second, who was responsible for recommending that investment, given the clear direction of the Financial Administration Act that limits investments to those "that are advisable for the sound and efficient management of public money"; and finally, what steps will the government take to recover the losses suffered by Ontario taxpayers on this scheme, losses that could add up to more than \$200 million?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I, of course, can't accept the characterization of this particular issue offered by the honourable member. I think the Minister of Finance has spoken to this issue on a number of occasions now. He has indicated that this is the kind of investment that has been made in the past by several governments of different political stripes.

He may not have indicated that during the course of the past four years the Ontario Financing Authority has achieved \$474 million in returns over and above the benchmarks set out for them. So while it is perfectly true that there will be some loss in this particular case, during the four previous years they were ahead \$474 million.

I think it's also fair to say, as the honourable member seeks to lay blame at the feet of the Ontario Financing Authority, that hundreds if not thousands of corporations and organizations throughout North America have been affected by this particular issue. We here in Ontario have been touched by it, and we will do our very best to ensure it does not happen again.

Mr. Frank Klees: I would hope that the Premier and the Minister of Finance take their fiduciary responsibility seriously.

The minister points out that he's not alone in this, but he is alone in not admitting responsibility, and he is very much alone in not asking for accountability from those responsible. I'll give you an example.

In the Yukon, the Auditor General has been called in to investigate. In New York state, the Attorney General has subpoenaed companies on Wall Street to get to the bottom of the scandal. Private firms here in Canada are suing their investment advisers. In Quebec, the head of the Caisse de dépôt et placements was called before a parliamentary committee to justify their involvement in this investment game of craps. So I ask the Premier: If in fact he calls as justification the fact that others in other jurisdictions and institutions find themselves in the same place, why does he not also ask for the same degree of accountability for those responsible?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The financial statements presented by the Ontario Financing Authority were in fact reviewed by the Provincial Auditor, and he offers this opinion:

"In my opinion, these financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Ontario Financing Authority as of March 31, 2007, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with Canadian generally accepted accounting principles."

Of course, the auditor has it within his purview to decide whether or not he wants to lend special interest to this at the time of his next issue of public accounts.

Again I say, this is the type of investment that has been embraced by a number of different governments of political stripes. Many of us have now found ourselves caught up in that. When I say that—including those that were referenced by the member—Alberta was caught up by this, CPR was caught up by this, Canada Mortgage and Housing, Canada Post, the city of Hamilton, Toronto Hydro, the Ontario teachers' pension fund, Toronto Pearson International Airport—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier misses the point. The issue is not who else is in the same mess; the issue is, how is this government handling the irresponsible investment of public funds? It's not up to the auditor to determine whether or not the investments were made consistent when he is reviewing financial statements; it is up to the auditor now to present us with a report on whether or not the government and its agencies have followed the act that prescribes, "When the Minister of Finance con-

siders it advisable for the sound and efficient management of public money, then certain investments can be made."

I say to the Premier, clearly these investments would not and should never have been considered for investment by the province of Ontario on behalf of taxpayers. I would ask one more time, Premier: Why would we not collectively want the Auditor General to table a report on this issue?

1420

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, if the Auditor General chooses of his own accord to take a particular interest in this, he is, of course, free to do so. The honourable member says that those responsible for this within Ontario Financing Authority lack judgment. He's also saying, of course, that those at Caisse de dépôt lack judgment, those in Alberta lack judgment, those at Canadian Pacific Railway lack judgment, those at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. lack judgment, those people working at Canada Post lack judgment, those folks at the city of Hamilton, Toronto Hydro, Société générale de financement du Québec, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Toronto Pearson International Airport, Sun-Times Media Group, Air Canada lack judgment, and hundreds, if not thousands, of organizations and corporations throughout North America and, indeed, Europe—because this has had global consequences—have all failed to show good judgment. I'm going to raise another possibility, given the impact of this particular issue: I think that people did use good judgment, but something happened that they didn't anticipate. I think it's now time for us to find a way to ensure that this kind of thing doesn't happen on a going-forward basis.

EMPLOYEE WAGE PROTECTION

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question for the Premier: Does the Premier think it's acceptable for companies to cheat workers out of hard-earned wages, severance pay and vacation pay when they close a factory or mill? If the Premier doesn't think it is acceptable, will he commit that McGuinty government members of the general government committee will schedule Bill 6, the employee wage protection act, for committee hearings and debate and refer Bill 6 back to this House for third reading as soon as possible?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know I speak for every member of this Legislature when we say that there is more that can and should be done when it comes to protecting workers in those cases where a business fails. I commend the member for the work he's doing in this regard. I know this is not a passing interest; he has expressed real concern for this issue for a long time.

The federal government, however, has recently introduced a bill aimed at protecting employee wages. We do support that federal bill. We hope it will soon become law. We'll wait to see whether it is going to be amended or will receive passage as it stands. So the step we are taking at this point in time is to look at the federal

legislation and see what we can do working in concert with the federal government.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier would know that this is an urgent issue, that there are workers all over this province who are facing situations where the mill has closed or the factory has closed and they're not being paid severance pay, they're not being paid vacation pay, they're not even being paid wages they've already worked for. I'm simply asking the Premier this: Can the Premier assure former workers from GenFast in Brantford, Amcan in Hamilton, Collins and Aikman in Mississauga, Mahle in Gananoque, Fincor in Toronto, Hartford Fibre in Kingston—workers who have been left high and dry by their employers—that the McGuinty government members will allow for committee debate and third reading debate of Bill 6, the employee wage protection act? You can wait for the federal legislation, or you can do something now. Which is it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think, in fairness to us on this side of House, this is a matter that was just recently addressed in this Legislature. It came in on fairly short notice. I have yet myself to have the opportunity to speak with our Minister of Labour about this. There may be considerable merit in this particular proposal. I say to the leader of the NDP that I appreciate the intervention he makes here today. What we are doing at this point in time is that we are clearly focused on the legislation that's working its way through the House of Commons. Beyond that, I will say, and provide my assurance to the member and leader of the NDP, that we will take a close look at the proposal that has been submitted and which I gather was aired earlier today in this very House.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, on short notice this Legislature dealt with fairness to military personnel, people who are called up as reservists, people who are called up as militia. There was no trouble dealing with that. This concerns workers who have already done the work, but their employer isn't paying them their vacation pay, isn't paying them for work already done, isn't paying them for severance pay which they're legally entitled to.

Members of this Legislature passed a bill on second reading today. My question is this: We're not interested in delay. Will you respect the wishes of a majority of the members of this Legislature and commit to bringing the bill forward for committee hearings as soon as possible and back to the Legislature for third reading as soon as possible? If it's good for members of the militia, if it's good for members of the Armed Forces reserve, why isn't it good enough for workers who have been cheated out of their severance pay, their vacation pay and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I'm not sure what more I can say to the leader of the NDP here and now. I'm not familiar myself with the substance of the proposal, but I am convinced that it has been brought forward out of the best of intentions and with the utmost sincerity. We need to see how this can be or whether it should, in fact, be reconciled with what is happening in the House of Commons.

I can say that I think there is more that we can do together to protect our workers. The federal government has responsibility for bankruptcy legislation. We have been largely focused, in this province, by way of progress in terms of providing supports to those workers through retraining and the like in the event of an unfortunate job loss.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Answer?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: But again, what I say to the leader of the NDP and his colleague who introduced this bill today, where it received passage on second reading, I believe, is that we will take a very close look at it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The Premier says, what more could he say. A simple yes will send it to committee immediately and we'll debate it.

But I want to ask again about the tragic death of Harne Sidhu, because citizens in Brampton are raising questions about the McGuinty Liberals' profit-driven corporate consortium hospital and the level of care or, should I say, the lack of an adequate level of care that patients are experiencing at that hospital, where unreasonably long wait times are certainly the case in the emergency room. Is it the position of the McGuinty government that when something like this happens in a much-advertised, brand new hospital that it's simply an internal hospital matter and the McGuinty government doesn't believe it's worthy of some attention from the government itself?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say, as I've had the chance to do on previous occasions, that we express sympathy in any circumstance where Ontarians have lost a loved one. I realize, of course, that those are trying circumstances, indeed.

The honourable member would create the idea, but it's not one that is very real, that we've not been attentive to the situation in Brampton. Nearly \$900 million of investment is very substantial evidence of our commitment to Brampton, not to mention that since the new hospital has come into operation, several hundred additional employees, nurses—almost 200 alone—are providing care in that environment.

We believe in community-based governance. It is at the heart of the principle of a publicly funded health care system here in Ontario. Accordingly, we think it's important that, in participation with the local community, the Brampton hospital and the community of people who run it be involved in conversation with their community, as has occurred this week, as we all strive to enhance the quality of performance in Ontario's health care system.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The more non-answers I receive from members of the McGuinty government, the more it seems to me there is evidence that we need an inquiry. The head of the hospital corporation says the hospital only cost \$550 million to construct. The Minister

of Health says \$900 million. The Minister of Health says that literally 200 new employees have been hired. The head of the hospital corporation says they are understaffed. The reality for Gurdip Dugga, suffering severe appendicitis, is that he had to wait 12 hours in emergency before being seen by a doctor and another 12 hours before he received the emergency surgery that everyone recognized he desperately needed.

Too many other patients have received similar inadequate care. How can the Premier and the McGuinty government be so certain that this situation has nothing to do with the fact that this is a profit-driven corporate-consortium hospital where much of the money is being diverted to corporate profits, not to patient care?

Hon. George Smitherman: Here we go again: the honourable member, one of the very rare breed of Ontarians who has the capacity, through all of the compensation and settlements that he's received, to pay cash on the barrel for his home and not to have a mortgage. His ongoing suggestion that somehow a funding mechanism of how we pay for a substantial investment, my figures including equipment and technology—this is the difference that the member seeks to depend upon in asking these questions.

Brampton hospital is a public hospital. We're proud of it. It's publicly funded, it's publicly controlled and it's publicly accountable. On the matter of public accountability, with the Brampton community, this is the responsibility of the relationship between that hospital, its community-based board of governors and the community. We have seen witness this week of the work that they're doing in the community. We applaud it and we call for them to continue as we all work together to build even better health services for the good people of Brampton.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government can misuse the term "public" over and over again. The fact is, everyone who agrees—even Conservatives agree that this is a profit-driven corporate-consortium hospital where literally hundreds of millions of dollars are being diverted to corporate costs, corporate consultants, corporate accountants and corporate profits. At the same time, patients who depend upon this hospital in Brampton are not getting an adequate level of care. Hundreds of people have come forward since the opening of the hospital with complaints about the lack of quality of care.

I say to the Premier: Don't you think it's wise to investigate your profit-driven corporate-consortium hospitals before you pour billions of dollars more into these projects, which will certainly benefit Bay Street in its search for profits but, as patients in Brampton are saying, are somewhat inadequate in terms of patient care?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that on behalf of the more than 300,000 women and men who daily dedicate themselves to the task of health care delivery in the province of Ontario, it's a highly suspect approach on the part of the honourable member to try and turn the doctors and nurses and those who provide care in that environment into some corporate-driven private entity.

This is an outrageous suggestion. It is only that honourable member who hides behind a long-ago capital plan that saw no hospitals built. Why doesn't he stand up and fess up that under the model that he is a proponent of with respect to the construction of hospitals, not only as in the case of Thunder Bay did the hospitals run double their proposed cost, but none were built? On their watch, none were built.

On our watch, the largest single renewal of health care infrastructure in the history of the province of Ontario; 100 projects more to do, and working with the good people of Brampton in support of their public hospital.

1430

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I'd ask all members to welcome a former member of this House, the representative from York East in the 35th Parliament, Mr. Gary Malkowski, and a number of his students. Welcome, Gary, and to the students today.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Premier today. The Canadian Institute for Health Information released statistics comparing mortality rates in hospitals across the country. The reality is that you are more likely to die in a hospital in Ontario than anywhere else in the country. We've heard recently about the 12-hour wait and subsequent death of Mr. Harnek Sidhu at Brampton Civic Hospital.

During the election, the Liberals promised to spend 100 million taxpayer dollars in growth funding for hospitals in Ontario's fastest-growing communities, notably the GTA and the 905, but not a word in the throne speech. Ontarians are pumping tens of billions of their hard-earned dollars annually into government coffers, including \$2.6 billion in health tax premiums.

Will the Premier confirm this promised expenditure and explain to the people of Ontario why they are more likely to die in a hospital in southern Ontario than they are in Saskatchewan, New Brunswick or Alberta, despite the billions being spent on health care in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will refer the question, but let me just take the opportunity to congratulate the member on his election and thank him for the question.

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member's pessimism, I think, is poorly placed. I do think that it's an outrageous statement that he's made. The University Health Network, one of the largest hospitals that we have in the whole country—just as one example of the many that were in those results—demonstrates that Ontario hospitals are performing well.

At the heart of it, we believe fundamentally that transparency around these matters is the strongest thing that patients have going for them. I want to just say to the honourable member that you will continue to see presentation of important information about what's going on

in hospitals, information that we're going to make sure is public, information that your party did not make public.

But what I find curious, especially from the honourable member, is that he repeated in his question his party's commitment to take \$3 billion out of health care. So perhaps in his supplementary question the honourable member can express how it is, on the one hand, that you want to see investment, when on the other hand you're still in favour of an elimination of \$3 billion in health care funding.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It amazes me that after four full years of government, this government is still unable to take responsibility for its own indecisiveness. Ontarians are literally sick and dying from this government's lack of action, and are tired of its excuses.

When can the people of Ontario expect the Premier to assure Ontarians that the likelihood of dying in a hospital will be less than in provinces like New Brunswick, Saskatchewan and Alberta?

Hon. George Smitherman: Our review of the data would indicate that it is principally Ontario hospitals that were involved in that presentation of information, with Ontario hospitals having the highest degree of participation in the selection of data from CIHI. We think that the release of the information, the transparency, is powerful for patients, and it will stimulate the appropriate decisions to make sure that those numbers which are coming down come down even further.

The real problem that is inherent in the honourable member's question, as he seeks to characterize our party in a negative light, is how you can, in good conscience, ask such a question, when only one or two months ago you were a proponent of a \$3-billion cut to health care in the province of Ontario.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. Today, we've remembered women who are victims of violence, but very often women and children have to stay at home with their abusers because of a lack of transitional or supportive housing of any sort. I'm asking you, Minister, if you will finally take this opportunity to come across with your promises for affordable housing.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think I'll refer that to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm very pleased to answer the honourable member. We have signed an agreement with the previous federal government called the affordable housing program. It's a strategy that's going to help 63,000 households in the province of Ontario, including 18,000 housing units, and 35,000 families are going to be helped with rent supplements. And the rent bank, which is an initiative I give credit to my predecessor for, has helped prevent 10,700 evictions. Of these units, 500 units are for victims of domestic violence.

We have more work to do, but I'm proud of the record of accomplishment to date. I look forward to working

with the member and all members to ensure that all fellow Ontarians have affordable housing at their disposal.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Through a freedom-of-information act request, we discovered that this ministry has, in fact, provided under 300—around 285 units—that actually rent for \$700 or under. That's what we consider affordable housing. They promised 20,000.

The reason I directed this to the minister for women's issues is because this is a women's issue. Today, when we commemorate the victims of violence, we are aware that women are the major face of poverty in this province and they're the ones that need the housing. So where is that housing, Mr. Minister?

1440

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to report to the honourable member that we have committed to 15,000 affordable housing units. To date, 3,066 are occupied under the rental and supportive plan, 596 under the home ownership, and 234 under the northern program. Under construction, as we speak now, are an additional 2,167 under the rental and supportive plan, 14 under the home ownership, and 167 under the northern plan.

Also, to date, we have provided 2,414 housing allowances under the Harris plan. Under the strong communities rent supplement plan, 3,000 of our fellow citizens are being helped; the city of Toronto housing allowance plan, 400; under the rent supplement plan of my colleague the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, 1,600. And the ROOF program, which starts in effect on January 1, will help upwards of 20,000 people in the province of Ontario.

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. As you know, the supply-managed sector of our agriculture industry has proven itself as an effective way of ensuring farmers earn a stable, profitable income. Yesterday, the Chicken Farmers of Ontario were at Queen's Park and I met with them. They impressed upon me the importance of maintaining the system of supply management that we currently have in the province.

I often meet with local representatives in my riding from the supply-management sector. During our meetings, these groups have repeated the call for both the provincial and the federal levels of government to continue defending the interests of those farmers dependent on supply management. Can you please tell this House today what our government is doing to protect the interests of the supply-managed producers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: An excellent question from a member who has a very vested interest in ensuring that the supply-managed industry thrives in the province of Ontario. Because of her good advocacy, our government has made it very clear on many occasions. I can say that as recently as two weeks ago, the federal, provincial and territorial ministers of agriculture met in

this city, and I was again able to very clearly present Ontario's case that we believe that at the World Trade Organization talks that are continuing in Geneva, Canada must continue to strongly advocate—in fact, not waiver in its commitment to—supply management.

A week ago in this House, our statement from the government, our Premier, made it very clear. We understand that supply management is so very important within our rural communities and we will do all we can to ensure that it remains intact as we know it today.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I can tell you from the riding of Huron-Bruce that it's very reassuring to see that this government is strongly defending the interests of the farmers. What is troubling to me is the position taken on the issue by the Ontario Landowners Association. According to one of the association's discussion papers, this organization wants supply-managed sectors to "become optional." This is very troubling to our Ontario poultry and dairy farmers, and to the rural communities that depend on them. Supply management is what enables the poultry and dairy farmers in my riding to succeed. Can you reassure the supply-managed farmers in my riding that this government will protect their livelihoods?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Many members in this Legislature know that we have on many, many occasions met with farmers from the supply-managed sector and other sectors, other farm leadership. They've made it very clear, first of all, that an optional supply-management program would simply not work; it would fail. And we don't want supply management to fail.

We have met with chicken farmers, with egg producers, with turkey farmers and with dairy farmers. They've made it very clear that they expect their government to defend their interests. I believe we have made it very clear on this side of the House that we are with them. We are with the farmers on the concession road and we will support supply management.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Would the Premier please inform the House why it is taking his government so long to approve a needed computed tomography, or CT scanner for the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Fergus?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I know that the enthusiasm for this in the local community has been enhanced by the fact that our government has made the broadest expansions in access to MRI and CT in the history of the province of Ontario, and the good folks in Fergus appropriately want on that bandwagon.

The ministry—as the honourable member knows—with the local health integration network and the hospital, is just working to ensure that the operation of said equipment would not cause the hospital to be in an unbalanced circumstance. I'm very, very supportive of it, and I look forward to being able to share with the honourable

member the progress towards yet another CT scan being installed in rural Ontario. In Northumberland Hills Hospital the other day, we celebrated the grand opening of a brand new MRI, and we want to continue to advance access to diagnostic services.

Mr. Ted Arnott: In this instance, the hospital submitted its proposal to the ministry in February. I wrote the minister in support of the project when I was asked to do so in June, and I also wrote the minister the very morning after the election eight weeks ago, asking the minister to approve it. The local health integration network in Waterloo-Wellington, I'm told, is supportive of the project, and I want to inform the House that the Georgetown Hospital is shortly going to be submitting a proposal for a CT scanner as well.

I would ask the minister, would he not today inform the House and inform our community that he is going to definitely approve that CT scanner that we need in Fergus immediately?

Hon. George Smitherman: I can tell the people, the honourable member's constituents and those who are interested in that service, that an important hurdle has been cleared, when, on October 10 the people of Ontario didn't invite your party to govern and cut \$3 billion out of health care spending.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the minister responsible for infrastructure renewal. Minister, the extension of Highway 407 eastward to Highways 35 and 115 is an important development and economic stimulus for Oshawa and the region of Durham.

Less than two weeks ago, I was pleased to hear that the federal government announced a completion date of 2012 for the extension of the highway. Can you clearly certify the completion date for Highway 407 through the region of Durham to Highways 35 and 115?

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question. Also, it's my first opportunity to congratulate you on your election to the chair, Speaker.

This government is determined to expand transit and highway access by increasing mobility of people and goods, reducing congestion and improving infrastructure. This is not simply going to help the region of Durham and the entire GTA, but also the province of Ontario compete for economic growth and global investment. One of the ways that we plan on doing this is investing in Ontario through something called FLOW: a \$4.5-billion investment by all three levels of government in public transit and highway infrastructure programs for the GTA.

As a part of this program, the Highway 407 east extension project was identified for completion in 2013. The government is working diligently to complete the Highway 407 east environmental assessment study to this end. A preliminary technical recommended route has been selected for both the highway and the transit way purposes. The new east-west transportation corridor extends Highway 407 easterly to 35/115 and two north-

south links connecting Highway 401 to the proposed Highway 407. I will be pleased to give additional information—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: For all those who didn't hear it, I believe the minister inferred that the completion date was 2013. My understanding is that the federal Minister of Finance specifically stated in the local papers that it would be completed by 2012. Upon meeting with them, I understand that a predecessor, a previous Minister of Transportation, signed agreements with the federal government stating that the completion date would be 2012. This is a very important piece of infrastructure for our community and for the development, in reducing gridlock and traffic congestion through the region along with economic stimulus.

Minister, can you tell us where the difficulty is or what we need to do to speed up that process to ensure a 2012 completion date?

1450

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, the agreement with the federal government has a completion date of 2013. You can take that back to your member and let him know that he was not correct in informing the people of Durham of that fact. But I can tell you that we have begun a round of public information—it was recently held in Durham region. The technically recommended route was presented to obtain input and feedback from the public; a hallmark of this government is this kind of consultation and co-operation with local communities. We're working hard to achieve our target date for completing construction without comprising—and this is very important—the provincial or federal environmental assessments and the improved terms of reference for the study. I look forward to that. If the member is speaking to his federal colleague, he could ask him to speed up the flow of dollars that were previously committed by the federal government.

I know the mayor of Mississauga—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. What is the McGuinty government doing to prevent big-box, for-profit daycare businesses from setting up shop in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure you that the question we will always ask is, what is best—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment.

I remind the minister to speak through the Chair, please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will always ask the question, what is best for the child? Our focus is quality, and providing parents with affordable, high-quality child care is what we do and what we will continue to do. A parent needs to know, when they drop their child off at a

licensed child care centre, that their child is in a high-quality learning environment with well-trained staff, whether it's a for-profit or a not-for-profit centre.

We're raising the bar on quality by establishing the College of Early Childhood Educators, the first of its kind in Canada. We've expanded the availability of child care through the creation of more than 22,000 new child care spaces, and we do have unannounced inspections whenever they occur.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps the minister isn't aware that 123 Busy Beavers Learning Centres is an offshoot of ABC e-Learning Corp., a global corporate concern that has undermined not-for-profit child care programs wherever they set up shop. The company has advertised for start-up as it prepares to open for business in Ontario; I have a copy of the ads for their start-up. Everyone knows, and this minister should too, because in her research papers from the last minister the evidence has been clearly outlined that, in fact, not-for-profit child care not only comes at a better quality but is much more affordable. Why is the minister not taking action to stop big-box commercial daycare corporations from operating in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One of the very first meetings I had as a new minister was with the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. I listened to their concerns, and my message to them is the same as the message I have for the member opposite: We will not compromise on quality standards that we set for our child care centres. All child care operators that come to Ontario, no matter where they come from or whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit, must be prepared to meet our standards if they wish to do—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The coalition asked for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Hamilton Centre will come to order. You just ask the question—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: For-profit and not-for-profit has remained relatively unchanged in this province throughout our expansion. Close to 80% of the licensed child care spaces in Ontario are not-for-profit.

MEDICAL ISOTOPES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of Health. This question is of particular interest to me not only on behalf of my constituents, as MPP for the great riding of Etobicoke North, but also as a physician with an abiding interest in the health care sector. Yesterday, media began to report that there is a continent-wide shortage of radioisotopes that are required for various diagnostic procedures. Would the Minister of Health be able to tell this House what the government is actually doing to address this shortage and the impact on patients?

Hon. George Smitherman: The challenges from Chalk River really have had global implications, and of course we're taking all steps with a view towards doing the very best for our patients in the circumstances. Provincial leadership on this is being exerted by Dr. Bob

Bell, the CEO of the University Health Network which, of course, includes Princess Margaret Hospital and Cancer Care Ontario. The efforts of those groups is to ensure that cases are prioritized appropriately across the province of Ontario, and there are protocols that are established for this. Cancer Care Ontario is writing to make sure that everybody is again familiarized with them as we seek to use the resources that we have available to prioritize those.

Earlier today I had a conversation with the federal minister, Tony Clement. His efforts are focused on the shorthand of identifying alternate supply, as there are some opportunities to replace the isotopes which are now in short supply, and getting Chalk River back on line as soon as possible. We'll continue to work with all players to try and enhance the circumstances for our patients.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate that information from the minister. As you know, many Ontarians have heard reports in the media that the shortage will have an impact on magnetic resonance imaging, or MRIs, and on computed tomography, or CT, wait times as doctors refer these patients and seek alternatives. Would the minister be able to tell this House how the government will deal with any potential impact on MRI and CT scanning wait times?

Hon. George Smitherman: In difficult circumstances everyone is called upon to be as resourceful as possible. If that means that an MRI or a CT can play a role that is alternate, then we'll look for all opportunity to be able to do that. Over the last number of years we've enhanced access to MRI and CT by more than 100%. So indeed, there is much more capacity deployed today in the province of Ontario.

If it does come to additional capacity being required, we'll work with all health care providers to enhance the MRI and CT capacity that might be available, but always within a context which seeks to prioritize the circumstances, to make sure that the resources that are available are made most available to the patients with the greatest need. We thank, especially in these times, our clinicians who have to make those challenging decisions on the front line, always with their patients in mind.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is for the Premier. The people of rural Ontario and our economy are suffering attack after attack from the McGuinty government. Excessive and costly regulations, red tape and disrespect for democracy have become the stock-in-trade of your government. From mills to markets to mines, the people of my riding and of rural Ontario are suffering at the hands of your government.

Premier, your legislation allows prospectors and government agents to trespass on and destroy private property. Your ministers dismissed the unanimous will of our local communities. Your legislation deprives people of due process. The people in this gallery and myself ask you, will you end this injustice? Will you show respect

for the people of rural Ontario? And will you move to protect their properties and their livelihoods by entrenching property rights?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say first of all that I welcome the member, congratulate him upon his election and offer him my very best wishes as he assumes his responsibilities. I think it will quickly become apparent that we have a significantly different perspective on the province, on our values and on our responsibilities. I happen to believe this is the greatest province in the best country in the world, and I start with that as my foundation.

The member champions an anti-government movement. I'll speak for a moment just in my capacity as an Ontario citizen. I count on my government to build, staff and maintain my schools so my kids can go there because I can't do that on my own. I count on my government to build, staff and maintain hospitals because my family can't do that on its own. I count on my government to protect our air and protect our water because I can't do that on my own. I count on my government to strengthen this economy because I can't do this on my own. I believe in government.

1500

Mr. Randy Hillier: I ask the Premier to read pages five and six of his throne speech, where you state that you have a plan for jobs, "good, high-paying jobs" that "put food on our ... tables."

Now, look around at the Liberal reality; look to the galleries and look into the faces of rural Ontario, and there you will see: Earl Saar, who lost his sawmill to the MOE; Gary Nicols, who is losing his business to the MNR; Bob Mackie, whose archery business was targeted by the NAC; Dave Honey, a juice grape farmer, squeezed out while OMAFRA watches; Bert Weery, who is fighting to keep his farm from the hands of the Attorney General; and Mr. Arnold Geisburger, whose crime was to cut firewood.

Will you make your throne speech meaningful by entrenching property rights in this House?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just cannot share such a negative perspective, embraced by a man who is so young to be so negative.

We have continued to work hand in hand with all Ontarians, including those who are blessed with the privilege of living in beautiful rural Ontario. We have worked hand in hand to improve the quality of their schools, hand in hand to improve the quality of their health care. These are things, people, of universal interest to all Ontarians. We worked hand in hand to strengthen their economy, for example, with our RED program. We worked hand in hand as well to protect the quality of the environment. We have learned a lot from Ontario farmers in particular. Apart from our First Nations, they are the original stewards of our land.

My pledge to rural Ontarians is that we will continue to work with them, hand in hand, to not only maintain but to enhance the special quality of life that is only to be found in rural Ontario.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. On Tuesday, the Premier admitted that the Mining Act of Ontario is flawed, regressive legislation and that it needs fixing. He admitted that First Nations have not been properly consulted and accommodated by the McGuinty government before it gave mining exploration permits to mining companies.

Given that the Premier now admits that constitutionally required consultation and accommodation of First Nations has not happened under the Mining Act, does the Premier agree that Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation should be financially compensated by the McGuinty government for a mining exploration permit that was given under a flawed and regressive Mining Act that needs to be fixed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Broadly speaking, I say to the leader of the third party, the government of Ontario is in discussions and will be entering into discussions about its ongoing duty to consult First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in the province of Ontario.

With respect to the Mining Act, there obviously is going to be consultation and co-operation that takes place with respect to a look at the Mining Act, which the Premier already referred to. I've had discussions with Grand Chief Toulouse. I've had discussions with a number of grand chiefs and a number of chiefs with respect to how that's going to proceed, and they're very interested in that, because we do need to have greater certainty in that regard.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened carefully; I did not find an answer to the question.

The Premier admits that the Mining Act that you have been granting mining exploration permits under is flawed, regressive legislation that needs fixing. Yet the McGuinty government gave a mining exploration permit to Platinex, and the judge who was involved in the court case said that there was not adequate consultation, that the government of Ontario did not meet its constitutional duty, and yet Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, which is an impoverished community, was forced to go to court. They didn't start the court action; they were forced to go to court to try to defend their rights, something which has cost them hundreds of thousands of dollars which they do not have.

If the Premier admits that the act under which this permit was given is flawed and regressive legislation that needs to be fixed, then doesn't it stand to reason that you should be compensating the First Nation that had to go to court because of your mistake?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I know the member knows that the government has already committed to supporting reasonable consultation costs to the First Nation, up to \$150,000. In fact, there have been discussions and that funding has been provided so that in fact they can retain whom they wish to get that advice.

More broadly speaking, the government of Ontario, the McGuinty government, is committed to resolving these issues without having these disputes and disagreements on particular consultations and particular exploration go to court. I'm in agreement with the leader of the third party if he says that we need to be resolving these things not by injunction but rather by discussion. And that is exactly what we are doing and that's exactly what we'll continue to do.

LAKE SIMCOE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Lake Simcoe is the heart and soul of many communities. Over 325,000 Ontarians live in the Lake Simcoe watershed, including many from the northern part of my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. These people depend on the life of the lake for the health and well-being of the communities. Thousands more spend their vacations with their loved ones at cottages on Simcoe's shores. Six communities rely on Lake Simcoe as a source of drinking water. Simcoe is the largest inland coldwater lake in the province. It lies in a significant agricultural area and important tourist destination. But there are pressures threatening Lake Simcoe. Phosphorous inputs into the lake have a serious impact on aquatic life and the overall quality of the lake. Minister, what is our government doing to ensure that future generations will continue to enjoy Lake Simcoe for years to come?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I thank the member very much for her question and congratulate her on her election. I know that she will do a great job for the residents of her riding.

This government is committed to creating a stronger protection for Lake Simcoe, as outlined by the Premier this summer in one of our platform commitments. We are taking action now to address phosphorous from all sources that enter into the lake. We are proposing strict interim limits on municipal and industrial sewage discharges and stronger requirements for storm management facilities.

We're going to invest in research and provide supporting information on reduced phosphorous discharged from both urban and agricultural as well as other sources. This investment will also help promote awareness of what people can do around their homes and workplaces to reduce their phosphorous footprint on Lake Simcoe.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is great news that our government is acting now to protect the lake. The people and communities around Lake Simcoe know that we must begin living in harmony with the lake and work toward sustainable communities in order to protect it for generations to come. What is our government doing to work toward a long-term plan to protect Lake Simcoe?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we're going to draw on the experts from all communities around the lake, including farmers, business, environmentalists, scientists, First Nations, citizens groups and, of course,

the local conservation authority. We will build on the science and work that's already been done by many individuals, including the province, the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, municipalities and the communities. We're going to set up a science advisory committee to ensure that the legislation and long-term protection strategies are based on good, solid science.

We're also setting up a broad-based, multi-stakeholder advisory committee. We're obviously going to consult with the First Nations, with historical and current cultural, economic and social heritage links to Lake Simcoe, and we're going to release a discussion paper within the next couple of months and develop a broad public consultation plan to gather input from all the people who are interested in the health of Lake Simcoe. The lake simply has to be protected for future generations.

1510

PETITIONS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth, under the leadership of Mayor Mike MacEachern and former Mayor Larry Keogh, has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture and the Liberal government step in to ensure that the Banting homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Jeff Leal: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than 800,000 Ontarians are living with diabetes and only 10% of this number are people living with type 1 diabetes. Currently insulin pumps are only available to people living with type 1 diabetes and only until they are 18; diabetes is a lifelong disease. An insulin pump assists people in maintaining and controlling blood sugar levels in order to reduce the number of acute complications and the severity of chronic complications

caused by inadequately managed diabetes. An insulin pump is \$5,000 plus \$150 per year for the disposable supplies for persons who are not covered or under 18 years of age. Canadian research indicates that, for every dollar invested in helping Ontarians manage their diabetes appropriately, the government would save \$4 when not having to treat the serious diabetes complications that can develop for inadequately managed diabetes.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that insulin pump coverage should be available for all Ontarians living with diabetes, as the insulin pump improves both blood sugar management and quality of life for persons living with diabetes."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with this petition, and I have signed it.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition here provided by members of the Step It Up! Campaign: Shanique Linton, Maylee Pettiford, Carol McFarlene, Tanya Taylor, Shenel Smith, Cadean Lewis, Zaman Afm and Alexandra Turnbull. They are petitioning to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, a group of concerned citizens, demand the production of more affordable housing (geared to income) units to accommodate our rapidly growing population and most importantly decrease the waiting time specifically for abused women and their children who are first priority as per the Ontario housing act.

"These women and their children have lived through abuse not only in the physical sense, but also emotionally, mentally, psychologically and financially, crushing their spirits and leaving scars that never fully heal. Many of the women and their families who survived abuse are forced to return to their unsafe living conditions. The cost of living is continuously rising and the women cannot afford to live independently in a market rental unit and the waiting time for an adequate and affording housing unit is much too long.

"Again, we demand that this issue be addressed in order to help and allow abused women and their families live a life that is free from violence by making their transition from shelters to homes as smoothly and as expeditiously as possible so that they may truly begin to heal;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To create more affordable (geared to income) housing units which will decrease the waiting time for women and their children escaping abusive and potentially life-threatening situations."

I agree with this, I have signed it and send it to the table by way of page Chris.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I still receive petitions from Consumer Federation Canada. It has to do with the crime of identity theft and it's addressed to the Minister of Government Services. It reads as follows:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature on December 8, 2005, be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information, such as SIN numbers and credit card numbers.

"(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

"(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reason.

"(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate."

Mr. Speaker, since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign it and send it to you.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised to make the needs of students a priority for his government and that students deserve to have a bright future with a good education; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised not to give up on students or Ontario's public school system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government work with the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board to establish an evening bus route from St. Joan of Arc High School in Barrie to the outlying communities. This would allow students to participate in extracurricular activities and help them to fulfill their potential, secure a bright future and receive the best educational experience possible, as promised to them by the Premier."

I agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

I'm delighted to sign this petition, and I'm sending it through page Chris.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the parents of St. Paul's elementary school in Alliston have raised many issues regarding the security, cleanliness and state of repair of their school; and

"Whereas a 2003 condition assessment completed by the Ontario government identified the need for \$1.8 million in repairs to St. Paul's elementary school; and

"Whereas the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board has approached the Ministry of Education with the intention of having the school deemed prohibitive to repair as they believe the school requires \$2.28 million in repairs, or 84% of the school replacement cost; and

"Whereas there are ongoing concerns with air quality, heating and ventilation, electrical, plumbing, lack of air conditioning and the overall structure of the building, including cracks from floor to ceiling, to name a few;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education immediately deem St. Paul's ... school prohibitive to repair, secure immediate funding and begin construction of a new facility so that the children of St. Paul's can be educated in a facility that is secure and offers them the respect and dignity that they deserve."

As I said before, my mother taught in this school for over 33 years and I attended this school from kindergarten to grade 8. I certainly agree and will sign this petition.

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HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson: I've got a bit of a backlog, Mr. Speaker.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 1999; and

"Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe-Grey."

I agree with that petition and I will sign it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Are there any further petitions?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing February 1, 2008, and ending July 31, 2008.

Payments for the period from February 1, 2008, to March 31, 2008, to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply for the 2007-08 fiscal year, and payments for the period from April 1, 2008, to July 31, 2008, to be charged to the proper appropriation following the voting of supply for the 2008-09 fiscal year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Phillips has moved government notice of motion number 11. Debate?

The member for Durham—no, excuse me, Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's always good to know where you're from. Thank you.

I'm a little surprised that the government doesn't want to lead off the debate on this. Of course, given the potential financial crises that this province is under, I can understand them avoiding any comment on the subject. The most recent disaster to hit the government is their loss of a quarter of a billion dollars of taxpayers' money, a quarter of a billion—that's with a "B"—down the drain, gone, because this government tried to get a little extra interest.

I can remember back in the 1970s when a trust company was going bankrupt and the holders, the members of that trust company came to the Ontario government and said, "You should pay us because this trust company went bankrupt." The trust company was paying about one per cent more interest than other trust companies were. Well, that one per cent of interest that they were paying in other trust companies went to pay for insurance against exactly such an eventuality. Those companies went bankrupt; the people lost their money, which was very sad, and the Ontario government has done exactly the same thing in this case. They have tried to get a little extra return because they've been putting Ontario taxpayers' dollars at risk through asset-backed paper. That has caused the loss of a quarter of a million dollars to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Now the spin doctors are hard at work on this issue. The spin doctors are saying, "We didn't really lose a quarter billion dollars. We really replaced that money with something else." The fact of the matter, the bottom line, how people will come to understand this issue, is that if you had \$1,000 and you lost \$250 but gained \$250 someplace else, you've still lost the \$250. It's still gone. If you hadn't lost that money, you would've had lots more money, but that money is gone. The taxpayers of Ontario lost that money and it's a shame that high-risk investments like that are being taken on by this government.

Other governments before them have invested in these vehicles, that's true, but at a time when there wasn't high risk involved in the marketplace. That high risk is a thing that has come to pass in the last few years, and a prudent government would have gotten out of those investment vehicles when the high risk of those elements began to show themselves in the marketplace. That's too bad, because a quarter of a billion dollars is a lot of money. It's a lot of money in anybody's vocabulary, and this government should be held accountable for that.

They should bring in the auditor on this issue. They should do a review on this issue. They should find out why they lost that money. They should find out why the investment people didn't get out of these kinds of investments when they had a chance to. And they should do a due diligence as to their fiduciary responsibilities in the area of looking after someone else's money. I always think that it's easy to look after your own money; the real responsibility comes when are you looking after somebody else's money, and that should never be ignored.

But it's somewhat typical of the government because they don't really have great planning going forward. For instance, Dalton McGuinty was down in Windsor the other day talking to the mayor. There are huge problems in Windsor; it's one of the hardest hit cities in Ontario. They have lost a huge number of jobs and there is no plan for the local economy, there is no plan going forward to enhance the border crossing area there. The people on the other side of the border in Michigan and the city of Detroit are trying to go ahead with a private sector expansion to the bridge so that we can move trucks across that bridge. It's a billion dollars a day in export trade. It is a huge bonus to Ontario's economy, and yet Ontario is dragging its feet. There was no mention of it in the throne speech. There was no mention of it by this government. We're not going ahead with this area.

We've all heard the stories of the 12 stoplights between Toronto and Miami or Toronto and Dallas, Texas: There are 12 stoplights and they're all in Windsor. It's a shame that a country and a province that depend on export markets and export trade to the degree that Ontario does still have this roadblock going through the middle of Windsor, which doesn't enhance the city of Windsor either. It is a detrimental effect with all of those trucks going through downtown Windsor in what looks like a constant line of trucks going down the main street.

The policies of this government of high taxes and really excessive regulation—in almost every area of industry you see excessive regulation that holds back manufacturers, holds back businesses and seems to say to them that you really don't want them in business here. Just the other day I was speaking to a manufacturer who was talking about moving a large stamping machine. Well, once you move a large stamping machine—the regulation came in about a year and a half ago—you have to rewrite the book on how to operate that machine, and you have to do it in just the right way that the Workers' Compensation Board wants you to do it. You can have that done by an outside group and it will cost you about \$10,000.

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That's like saying to a manufacturer who is going to move his stamping mill, "Listen, we really don't want you in business here, because here is \$10,000 you have to spend just because are you moving a machine from one side of your shop to another side of your shop, because the flow pattern within your business is changing." That manufacturer was in the process of revamping all his companies. He's in the business of stamping out shelving

for retail stores. That shelving, in a year and a half or two years from now, is going to be coming from China. It's the kind of thing that the Chinese do extremely well and they do extremely cheaply. It's too bad we will lose that plant or that production simply because he keeps getting messages with higher and higher taxes, more and more regulations that "We don't really want you in this province. You're not where we want to be. You're not where we want to go." If you send that message to manufacturers time after time after time, they get the message. If we look at that message, if we look at how that message has been received—and I could read pages and pages of them. If there's any doubt as to what has been happening in Ontario, just in the month of November where I think it was 2,400 more manufacturing jobs that disappeared in the province, whether it be the GenFast company in Brantford, whether it be Beta Brands in London, whether it be Collins and Aikman in Gana-noque, whether it be the Collins and Aikman plant in Toronto, Accuride in London, Weyerhaeuser in Kenora, and it goes on and on. It goes on and on and on, month after month, year after year, and we're being told that these job losses are going to be increasing.

Now, the government talks about their job creation record. The Liberals tell us that under their tutelage, the economy of Ontario has increased the number of jobs in Ontario by 422,800. That's in the period from October 2003 to October 2007. They take great credit for this. Over half of those jobs have been created in the public sector. The taxpayers of Ontario are paying the salaries of over half those jobs created. Now, in comparison to what might be expected under a government that was friendly to industry, friendly to manufacturers, friendly to people who are out there putting their money on the line and taking risks with it, from June 1995 to June 1999, the same period of time and during the first four years of the Harris mandate, there was a total of 536,600 jobs created: over 110,000 more jobs in our first four years of mandate than in your first four years of mandate.

But one of the telling statistics in those job creations was that during our first four years of mandate, we created 156,600 new manufacturing jobs. This government in their first mandate saw 130,500 manufacturing jobs flee this province because they weren't in a friendly environment. They weren't in an environment that said, "We want you. We like you. We need you." Those jobs are gone. You probably realize that when a job goes, it's far more difficult to get it back than it was to get that job originally. When a company leaves Ontario, they leave with a bad taste in their mouth. And those stories go around the world, that Ontario is not the friendly place that it once was. That affects jobs. That affects people who work in Welland; it affects people who work in plants in Thorold and around the country. It affects people who work in Windsor. It has affected Windsor perhaps more than any other city in the province.

What has this government done? You know, originally, last year, the Premier talked about this being a small contraction in our job market. Well, apparently the small contraction has finally blossomed into a problem, as Mr.

McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario, has now appointed the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane to exam the demise of the manufacturing industry in Ontario. Apparently, he recognizes this as more than a small contraction. Apparently, he now recognizes it as a real problem: 175,000 families in Ontario who have lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector. Each one of them could tell him this was a problem, and they could have told him it was a problem a long time ago. But now he has appointed Mr. Ramsay to this job of having a look at the problem that we are facing in the manufacturing industry, and he says that Mr. Ramsay is extremely well suited because of his work as Minister of Natural Resources in dealing with industry in the north that is under pressure.

Well, under Mr. Ramsay's tutelage in the Ministry of Natural Resources, 14 different sawmills closed. A record number in Ontario have closed under the tutelage of that minister. In his term of office as minister 48 pulp and paper mills have closed or temporarily shut down. A huge percentage of the capacity of our industry has been decimated.

This minister, as a reward for his activity as Minister of Natural Resources, has now been put in charge of looking at the manufacturing industry. As I said earlier this week, I have great fear and trepidation for the future of this industry. I think it's in a lot of trouble. I don't think that this government is taking any action at all, or doing the right things to get to take that action, in the foreseeable future.

So I leave the comments to other members of our caucus, I'm sure, who will pick this up.

Hon. David Caplan: More?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Yes, there will be more jobs gone. There will be more jobs lost and gone from a government that believes in high taxes, high regulation and an uncompetitive marketplace. That's what the problem is in this issue and that's where you have failed. You failed in the last term, and you will fail in this term, because you don't understand the problem, you don't know what manufacturers need. You should be ashamed of yourself for trying to smooth over these huge problems that you're completely ignoring.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've got to say, it's a pleasure to be back. I miss this chamber when we're not sitting and when the House is not operating. I almost said "functioning," but far be it from me to go that far. It's exciting. Here we are. This is a new Parliament. There's new faces, many old faces—that is to say, not old, but people who are returning.

I, for one, am very proud of the two additions to the New Democratic Party caucus. Paul Miller—I'm sorry, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—today showed himself to be everything that the voters wanted in a representative, in a member. That's terrific. The member for Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, is I think a very important complement, addition, to not just the NDP caucus here, but to this Parliament.

You should know Welland, the city of Welland. Now, there's the riding of Welland, which includes south

St. Catharines, Thorold, Welland, Port Colborne and the historic lakeside community of the township of Wainfleet. But the city of Welland, in fact, has two representatives in the provincial Legislature. I, of course, am proud to have been an MPP representing that community amongst others for a few years now, but I was pleased—not that we didn't hope for our own partisan success in that riding—to see that Sophia Aggelonitis has joined us from Hamilton Mountain.

Why I say that is because, you see, she's the second Welland representative. She grew up in Welland; she's a Wellander at heart. When you see some of the things that she's going to do in the next four years, and listen to some of the things she's going to say, I think you'll be able to tell that. I say that in a most complimentary way.

Her folks, Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis, run the Fireside Restaurant down on Southworth St., down towards Ontario Road. It's been there for decades. These are hard-working people, incredibly hard-working people. Sunday morning breakfast at the Fireside is packed. It's line-up time—it is. It's a breakfast with real potatoes and real bacon served with a friendly, generous spirit. But as well, don't miss lunch and dinner throughout the rest of the week.

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I remember back to lawyering days, because the lawyers and judges tend, at least in smaller-town Ontario—I suspect in big cities like Toronto, too—to find little hangouts. For years, it was the Reeta Hotel on East Main Street, until that got torn down. The Fireside was one of those places where you'd run into more than a few lawyers and judges during the course of the week having lunch or either Saturday or Sunday morning breakfast. I just want to say that Mary and Charlie Aggelonitis, I'm sure, are extremely proud, as they should be, and I'm looking forward to the chance to see them and acknowledge them here in this Legislature when they come to see their daughter do what she is going to be doing as a member of this Legislative Assembly.

There have been tough times for Ontarians, haven't they? Tough times, mean times, hard times, vicious times. We're rapidly reaching the 200,000 mark in terms of good manufacturing and resource sector jobs lost. Whether it's the white goods, the appliance industry in Hamilton which has been devastated—it's disappeared; it's not there anymore; it's gone. The last washing machine, last freezer was built there a couple of years ago now, and it's not coming back. Or if it's the electronics industry, which at one point was so prevalent here in the province. I remember as a kid the Sylvania tube factory down in Dunnville, right on the main drag of Dunnville, Sylvania CRT—cathode ray tubes—back in the 1950s, for the very earliest of televisions. That industry is gone.

Down where I come from, the forge and foundry industry employed a whole lot of people, hard-working people—because you have to work hard if you're working in the forge or foundry industry. You know that, don't you? And you do it at great risk, sometimes. I don't

say it lightly. You walk around town and you get some signals as to who worked in the forge and the foundry; they're the fellas with a digit or two missing. Even today, in a climate where one presumes that the technology for creating safe use of dangerous machinery is as well-developed as it could possibly be, there are still tragic injuries imposed upon workers and deaths.

The industry is rapidly disappearing. As a matter of fact, Howard Hampton is joining me tomorrow down in Port Colborne at the Port Colborne Drop Forge picket line, where those steelworkers have been forced on strike, forced on strike, forced on strike because the company is demanding that they relinquish their pension plans. Management is calling upon these hard-working folks to surrender their defined benefit pensions and to somehow join the ranks of the 401K-ers from the United States of America with a self-financed pension plan.

A self-financed pension plan works real good if you're a 401K-er and you're making \$200,000, \$300,000, \$400,000 a year. It's not hard to finance your own pension, is it? It's not hard for the Four Seasons set, the Yorkville set, the BMW, the Mercedes set to build their own pension plans, self-finance them to create private pension plans. It's not hard at all when \$10,000, \$20,000 dollars is but pocket change. You blow that on a weekend at the resort.

I know these folks at the Port Colborne Drop Forge are working at hard, dangerous jobs. These are important jobs, incredibly important jobs, because they're value-added manufacturing jobs, wealth-creation jobs. With all due respect to the casino industry, casinos don't create wealth; they don't add value. They separate people from their wealth; they redistribute it. They don't create wealth. With all due respect to the service sector, in large part, it's not wealth creation, it's wealth redistribution.

Tourism—and again, I know people down where I come from, down where my colleague from Hamilton Mountain grew up. The tourist industry is increasingly important for people who have lost their jobs in the industrial sector. But you don't create wealth, you don't add value in the tourist industry. Inevitably, workers down in Niagara, like they are across the province, are being forced into lower- and lower-wage economies. They're going to be joining those workers at the Port Colborne Drop Forge. They're Steelworkers, members of the United Steelworkers of America. This is a novel experience for them, to be on a picket line. For decades, there was never any need for one. But you've never had management calling upon hard-working workers to forfeit their pension rates, their dental benefits, those very fundamental things.

You see, nobody ever gave workers nothing. Everything that workers have acquired in this province, across this country, throughout the western world has been the result of their struggle—an often bloody struggle, an often deadly struggle. Huge costs have been paid by generations of workers. Everything that workers have acquired—be it pensions, be it benefits, be it enhanced workplace safety, be it some prospect of retiring with

some dignity—was won by workers in their struggle on the ground and at huge costs to those workers.

We don't need governments like the Liberals here in Ontario, with a Premier who wrings his hands and says, "I feel their pain," when he is confronted with the reality of hundreds of thousands of workers being driven from their jobs. We need a Premier who is prepared to understand the crisis that exists in this province and is prepared to promote, advance and pass legislation that protects those workers, not further punishes them. That's why we were proud to support Bill 6 this morning, as did the rest of the Legislative Assembly. There was unanimous support for Bill 6 today. That's what the vote record is: unanimous support for Bill 6, Paul Miller from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

That, in and of itself, is a good thing. But, you see, it's no longer a private member's bill. Once a bill passes second reading, it effectively becomes, for all intents and purposes, a government bill. In other words, the government controls its destiny. Mr. Miller, the member who's the sponsor and author of the bill, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, has no power whatsoever to advance that bill any further, none whatsoever. It's entirely in the Premier's office's hands. It's just like the fate of so many government backbenchers: It's entirely in the hands of the Premier. Merit has nothing to do with it. There are government backbenchers here who have impressed me, impressed their constituents and impressed the general public with skill and talent. Some have demonstrated outstanding speaking ability in the Legislature. But though they've won the hearts and minds of their electorate and of the huge public that watches them on their television sets, somehow they haven't won the favour of the Premier's office—not because they've done anything wrong, by God. The member for Mississauga-Streetsville was as faithful, obedient and capable a backbench servant as any government could have. What is his reward? Oblivion.

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One looks somewhere way up in the back, way in the back, there. I think that's him—he's a good man—way in the back, while others of far less talent—in his view, I'm sure—are in cabinet. Is there justice? I supposed not. But after all, we're talking about the Premier's office. We're not talking about the good judgment of a critical mass of people; we're talking about the Premier's office. We're not talking about a meritocracy; we're talking about the Premier's office.

And just as the fate of so many Liberal backbenchers is in the hands of those in the Premier's office, the fate of good legislation like Bill 6 is in the hands of the Premier's office. Will the Premier's office nurture that legislation? Will it nurture that policy? Will it cultivate it and help it to become a reality, so that workers in this province have some comfort from the devastation of a company that shuts down and then runs away or shuts down with no assets? Will the Premier let that policy blossom? No. He'll crush it and deny workers in this province the modest comfort they would receive from an employee wage protection plan.

Are there government members who are dismissive of the proposal because, oh well, there are new jobs, there's a new economy? Let me tell you this, my friends: When you're 50 or 55 years old—about the same age as more than a few people here—and you chose an industrial workplace career, you may not have gotten your grade 13 or even your grade 12, because back in the days when you started your working life, grade 10 was considered an acceptable academic background. It doesn't mean you're not bright; it doesn't mean you're not talented; it doesn't mean you're not skilled; it doesn't mean you don't have a lot of potential. But when you've got grade 10 and you've been working in a mill all your life as part of the labour pool and you lose your job, the slide from a high-wage working middle-class lifestyle to the despair of poverty can be very rapid and steep.

If you're eligible for EI—and, Lord knows, fewer and fewer people are in this province because Liberal Finance Minister Paul Martin raided the EI fund—that'll expire in no more than a year's time. You'll use up some modest savings. If you have some equity in the house, because, after all, at that age you've been financing a kid's, or two or three kids', college or university education, and more than a few working people have mortgaged the house once again even though it had all been paid off—I'm not talking about Rosedale mansions; I'm not talking about big monster homes down along the Lake Ontario shore in Mimico where members of Parliament want to build four-storey garages for their homeless Porsches; I'm not talking about those places with the big three-storey columns like those antebellum homes down in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi. I'm talking about little Insulbrick houses, little two- or two-and-a-half bedrooms—1,000 square feet on a good day, and many times even less; a wartime house in Welland, 653 square feet. Do you know how many families with four, five and six kids grew up in a 653-square-foot house? It's remarkable, but it's true—hard, hard, hard-working people.

So if you have any equity left, you borrow against the house to carry you through some hard, hard times. You look for work and you look for work and you look for work. You see, the problem is that the low-wage jobs—the retail-sector jobs and the tourist jobs—that used to be available to students aren't there for students anymore, because students are competing with their parents for those same jobs. You know that, don't you?

If you're a tradesperson—a machinist or a millwright; I was just telling somebody earlier today that in the industrial shutdowns down Niagara way, whether it's Ferranti-Packard up in the St. Catharines riding or E.G. Marsh down in what used to be Mr. Hudak's riding, now mine, or Atlas Steels, Union Carbide, Shaw Pipe—heck, the big frame factory, Hayes Dana Thorold. If you're a tradesperson making a good wage, working hard for it and earning what you deserve after a whole lot of years of experience acquiring a whole lot of skill and a whole lot of hands-on ability, making \$25 or maybe \$30 an hour, and you head up the industrial strip along the QEW south of Lake Erie, that same person is bidding for jobs at \$12, \$13, \$14, \$15 an hour.

It's a dramatic change in lifestyle, friends. Those kids you were helping to support while they were attending college and university? The support is over. Those mortgage payments aren't being made. Needless to say, you aren't buying cars, you aren't buying washing machines, you aren't buying snowmobiles and you aren't buying television sets. Pretty soon you lose your home, and then you compete in a relatively unregulated rental market for an apartment. Before you know it, you're behind on your rent and relatives have lent you everything they can lend you, and before you know it, there's simply nothing left.

The social cost is tremendous. Marriages break down. Kids are literally forced out of their home before their time because they know the pressure that's on the family. Incidence of drug abuse and alcoholism escalates. It is a very desperate Ontario out there that has received no acknowledgement, never mind support, from the McGuinty Liberals—Niagara and Hamilton.

If you travel west along the 401, the Siemens plant is gone. Do you remember it? How many of us have driven past it—it seems like a million times—the big Siemens plant? The auto parts sector: gone, over, finished. Keep going further west toward Windsor—I know my colleagues in Windsor understand the despair in those auto communities. You've got the St. Thomas Ford plant at risk—another big whack of employees. These folks, the St. Thomas Ford workers, are spread out over a huge geographic area. You've got auto assembly lines of all the Big Three at risk everywhere you go in the province of Ontario. And there is a ripple effect. Just as one understands that for every auto job there are four, five, six or seven other jobs, every time you lose an auto job, you lose four, five, six or seven other jobs. That's the reality of it.

The minimum wage here at Queen's Park is six-digit—it is—and that paycheque comes whether you show up or not; that paycheque comes whether you're late or on time; that paycheque comes whether you're paying attention or you're not paying attention. It does. In how many jobs in the world can you roll over and tell your bed partner—I'm going to be so politically correct—"Honey, call in and have them cancel my 9 o'clock appointment, because I don't feel like going to the office for 9 this morning. Tell them I'm meeting with the Premier or something; that will impress them"? It will; it will dazzle them, right? In how many jobs in the world can you roll over and say, "Honey, call the office and tell them I won't be in for 9 o'clock," or "Honey, tell them to cancel my appointments today. Tell them I had to do an emergency trip to Ottawa to meet with the Prime Minister, because I'm oh, so important"? No steelworker was ever able to tell his or her spouse or bed partner that; no bricklayer, no carpenter, no pipe maker, no farmer. It's one in the few jobs in the world you can do that in, here at Queen's Park—minimum wage, six digits.

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New Democrats are absolutely committed to holding this government to account and to pursuing an agenda that's going to save the jobs that are left and restore the

jobs that are gone, and pursuing an agenda that's going to provide comfort and support for working women and men rather than putting them under the gun, because the workers of this province deserve no less. I'm looking forward to being a part of that. Thank you kindly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'm pleased to speak on interim supply tonight and happy to rise in this House. Congratulations, sir, to you on your elevation to that esteemed Chair.

I will speak about interim supply and a bit about our government's record. I do want to take the chance to address the comments made by, I think, the member from Halton and the member from Welland and try to respond to a little bit about what they said and put it into—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, things in Windsor—there's a prominent Conservative there who set up a website that's calling for a leadership review in the Conservative Party. Mr. Kouvalis, I think his name is. He has mentioned a number of potential leadership candidates. I see by the absence of many Tories that a number of them are out campaigning, or perhaps trying to support their leader, or perhaps trying to undo the damage they did with their commitment on private schools. I know Mr. Klees was a big supporter of that. He must have been very disappointed. I know that the party is doing a lot of internal searching. I congratulate those members of the Conservative Party in Windsor, all four of them, who are leading the charge. So yes, I would like to speak a little bit about Windsor tonight.

To the member from Welland, who speaks so eloquently and passionately about the working men and women of this province: I'm proud the CAW supported our party in the last election, the union that represents most of the workers you referred to. I am proud that the building trades supported this party and not your party in the most recent election. I am proud that the firefighters and many other working men and women supported this party. I am proud that in the great labour centres of this province—Windsor, Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, to name but a few—the people of those great communities returned Liberals because they reject your rhetoric. They know that you talk a good game but forget to remind those people that this member was a member of a government that opened up and stripped collective agreements. He would prefer not to think about that and he would prefer not to talk about the 1,300 people a month who lost their jobs when he was part of a government. He doesn't want to speak about that.

So I'm glad to have had the opportunity, at least briefly, to address some of their concerns. What I would like to talk more about is some of the government's agenda, some of what we've achieved, some of what we've outlined in our speech from the throne and how we intend to make sure that the people of this province—all the people of this province—see the benefit of the growth that we have experienced overall, recognizing the real

challenges facing so many sectors of our economy, particularly manufacturing, forestry, agriculture and tourism. It is absolutely essential that all of us work together to make sure that every Ontarian shares in the bounty that is this great province. The Premier often says that when we are rowing together, when we are working together, we can move forward. So it's important to pass this motion.

Let me just talk about some of the technical aspects of it for those listening. This motion allows the government to spend money. It allows us to pay public servants. It allows us to fund nursing homes, universities and our municipalities. It allows us to meet our obligations. It's a cornerstone of how our parliamentary democracy works. It's rooted in a great British tradition that sees the expenditure of all money accountable to the Legislative Assembly, or the Parliament as the case would be in a national government. So this is an important afternoon, and I'm pleased to rise and speak about supply.

When I say it gives the government the ability to spend money, it gives the government the ability to meet its obligations, to meet its mandate and to affirm its commitments to the people. Let's talk about where we were some four years ago, where we are and where we hope to be over the next four years, given the great privilege, as the Premier always says, that the people of this province have bestowed upon those of us on this side to govern, upon all of us to serve in this great institution.

When we came to office in 2003, there was a \$5.5-billion deficit. That was in spite of the fact that the previous government, the Conservative government, the Tory government, had said we had a balanced budget. They said that; they advertised it.

Hon. David Caplan: At Magna.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: My colleague reminds me: They delivered that budget at Magna. They didn't even come into the House as we are here today to face the Legislature—complete contempt of the Legislature. I see two of the three members opposite were there, voted for that budget, voted for the \$5.5 billion and then tried to pretend through the election—but the people of Ontario saw through that. They saw through the kind of empty rhetoric we heard earlier when we talk about the economy.

There are challenges, and I am proud of some of our government's initiatives to address the challenges. I'm also proud of the fact that in many ways our economy is performing well, and that's what makes it such a difficult issue to grapple with. That's probably why the federal Conservative government has done nothing for our manufacturing sector. They gave broad-based corporate tax cuts again. Well, if you're not making money, you're not paying taxes, so you're not going to benefit. Yet they refuse to participate, for instance, in the \$500-million automotive strategy that levered \$7 billion in new investment in this province.

The member from Welland, who was rejected by the CAW, who was rejected by so many organized labour groups—his opinions and views on the economy were

rejected and his party's views were rejected by the people of Ontario—did cite those cases where people have lost their jobs. That is something that all of us take very seriously, but we also have to remember investments by companies like Toyota, upgrades where we now have had \$7 billion in new investment in Ontario in the various product lines at all of the Big Three right across the province.

Where would we have been if we didn't have that fund? Where would we have been? I'll remind members of the House and the public listening in, that the member from Welland-Thorold voted against it. He voted against assistance to automotive assemblers, the original equipment manufacturers. He voted against assistance for parts plants. The very ones he talks about closing, he voted against providing assistance to those plants. He voted against the employment and retraining initiatives that were contained in our 2006 and 2007 budgets. He voted against that.

You know what's really troubling? Do you know that an unemployed worker in Windsor today has to work more hours than an unemployed worker in Fort McMurray, Alberta, to qualify for employment insurance? Not once has that member from Welland-Thorold talked about that. We certainly haven't heard from the Conservatives on that. We haven't heard from them.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You should have made that speech a month ago, Dwight.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We did make that speech, I say to you with respect, and that's why we're on this side of the House and you're on that side of the House. I'll say that the people of Ontario affirmed their commitment, and they believe that the Ontario Liberal Party and Dalton McGuinty get it and represent their best interests, sir, and that's why we're here and you're over there.

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When we came to office, there were a number of deficits, over and above the financial deficit. We had a deficit in education. I think the figure was 25 million student days lost—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Twenty-six million.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Twenty-six million school days lost to strikes under the Conservative government; not one day lost under this government. I am proud of this government's investments in public schools and in publicly funded education. And we carry on. The Minister of Education yesterday introduced the trans fat bill. I only wish they had had that when I was in school. It's an important public health initiative and one that all of us should take very seriously. That record continues and will continue to grow.

On health care, 39 hospitals closed; no ability to measure wait times; no ability to account for the expenditure of hard-earned tax dollars. This government implemented those changes. This government has been investing in public health care. This government is protecting public health care. This government is building hospitals, hiring nurses, training more doctors and addressing the very real needs of the people of this province. I think that too

contributed to the re-election of this government and the choice of Dalton McGuinty to be Ontario's Premier for another four years.

And there's more to do. As long as one family is involuntarily out of work, we're not going to rest. We're going to make the kinds of investments that will keep our manufacturing sector competitive, that will help our forestry sector—\$1.1 billion to the forestry sector, I might add.

Some members of the House allege that we're not doing enough, we're not doing as much as other jurisdictions, that the losses here have been greater than anywhere else, and that's simply not the case. The value of the dollar has had a huge impact. We're very concerned about the state of the US economy. Some 86% of our exports go to the United States. That's an extremely important market. But let me tell the member opposite, who says it's always someone else, you know what? Growth in Ontario in the first two quarters exceeded the private sector estimates and that is because of someone else. That is because of the hard-working men and women and the business people who invest in this province and work hard, and that's why we've had the growth we've had, in spite of all the predictions. When you compare us to other jurisdictions of comparable economic makeup, where the resource and manufacturing sectors are as big a part of the entire economy as they are in Ontario, what you find is an economy that has proven remarkably resilient in the face of these very real challenges.

Some of the members opposite like to talk about Ontario's growth relative to other provinces and say, first of all, that it's the worst in Canada, which isn't true and, second of all, that it's all the fault of the province. They never go on to the paragraph after the number. It's not us saying the Canadian dollar, the price of oil and the state of the US economy; it's the economists in the private sector who are saying it. In fact, our credit agencies reaffirm their faith in the way Ontario manages its finances every year. So members of this House and the general public can have confidence as we move interim supply tonight that their money is prudently managed. They are invested properly in public health, public education and it's paying real dividends.

Interjection: The things that we need.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The things we need, the priorities that the people of this province have.

The people of Ontario rejected a private school funding model. They did; they rejected it clearly and unequivocally in the last election. The people of Windsor rejected that. Yes, I was delighted to hear the member opposite was in Windsor. It's unfortunate his leader never found his way there during the last election. It's unfortunate that their party voted against the assistance to our community, whether it was through the municipality, through Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, all of whom participated in the manufacturing incentives that we offered, or whether it was voting against the cut in the business education tax that's saving our employers \$540

million. They voted against that. They didn't come to town. It's nice that the member got there after the election, and, like I say, it's kind of interesting that that website that we've read so much about in recent times started up in Windsor.

Mr. Jeff Leal: What about Volkswagen, the new investment—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That's right: the Volkswagen van. That was assisted by the automotive fund as well.

There are challenges; there's no doubt. I saw it as I went door to door. I saw it in the faces of families, good people, hard-working people, people who are hurting. Our unemployment rate is the highest in the country right now—the highest.

But they voted for us, and they voted for us because they know that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have their interests at heart and have the right ideas to get us through this. We're going to stand up for Ontario. It's unfortunate that members opposite won't.

I think it was the member for Halton who talked about his visit to Windsor. If he'd listened carefully, he would have heard people saying, "Why is it that somebody in Windsor has to work a lot longer to qualify for employment insurance than somebody working in Fort McMurray, Alberta?" Why is that? It's not right. It's wrong.

Why is it that Ontario is not going to get a fair number of seats in the federal House? Why aren't you doing anything about that? Why aren't the federal Conservatives dealing with that?

Why would the federal Conservatives—I presume supported by their provincial brethren—want to increase the tax on electricity, increase the tax on natural gas, all the things that are essential to manufacturing?

The member's got a strange and quizzical look in her eye. The federal Conservatives want to harmonize the PST and GST. I heard Mr. Flaherty—and I presume that you support him. You're all Conservatives, after all. I know there are some divisions in that party these days, but I presume that you support him. He sat right here in this House with three of the four of you who are here today. I presume you support that. I presume you want to raise those taxes. I presume that's what you're going to do: support them in that.

I wish they'd come to the table on the automotive investment strategy and the manufacturing investment strategy, but they won't. They've said no. They give broad-based tax cuts to companies that are making money, but what about the companies that aren't making money? What about the companies that are marginal, that need that investment?

In 1981, Larry Grossman, a great member of this assembly, was part of a Conservative government that at the time supported a loan guarantee to Chrysler Corp., which operated in my community and operated in Brampton. They supported that. That loan guarantee was opposed by some, but they supported that, along with the then-federal government of the day and the government of the United States of the day, and that saved Chrysler

Corp. The loans were never taken out, the guarantee was repaid four years ahead of schedule, and there are still thousands of people working in that company today. That is an example of the sort of thing we wish the federal Conservatives in Ottawa would do. Just do what Progressive Conservatives like Larry Grossman and Bill Davis did the last time the auto sector saw such a huge downturn. Don't say no to Ontario.

I say to my friends opposite as we debate supply: Stand up for Ontario. Stand up for our ability to provide health care. Stand up for our ability to provide publicly funded education. Stand up. Stand up for fairness. We on this side of the House are proud Canadians, all of us, every one of us. It's good to see so many new Canadians on our benches, some elected for the first time and some have been here a little longer. I'm very proud of that, proud to be part of a party that would attract so many people of so many diverse backgrounds, not only to its party membership, but to seats in this Legislature. When I hear the accents in our caucus and when I speak to the parts of the world that these people come from, that really fills me with a lot of pride. Stand up for this province, which is such a great part of the country, because they may not understand on the Conservative benches, and they certainly don't understand it in Ottawa, but if Ontario's not strong, then Canada's not strong. A federal government in Ottawa ought to pay closer attention to our great province.

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I see my colleague the Minister of Energy sitting next to me. I want to speak for a couple of moments because part of supply is the Ministry of Energy, a portfolio that is particularly warm to me. I see another former energy minister, Minister Cansfield—now the Minister of Natural Resources—sitting here.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Very warm for everyone.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Nobody wants to stay there too long. The decisions we have been taking over the course of the last three years are the sorts of decisions that should have been taken five, six, seven, eight years ago. They should have been, but they weren't. That's the mess we were left with.

I see my friend Mr. Tabuns. I remember that before he joined this Legislature, he wrote me a very nice letter in his capacity as executive director of Greenpeace Canada. He applauded us for taking off the price cap. He said it was the right thing to do. He said it was the proper thing to do because it's a conservation initiative. And the Tories opposite still want a price cap. They'd rather have small taxpayers subsidize big corporations. That makes sense. I understand that, but you know what? The price of electricity is down in Ontario since we took office. It's down. You can go on the website every day and have a look at it. The delivered price of electricity is down. We've got more power online; we've got more being built and developed. We've gone from last to first in terms of non-hydro renewable energy in Canada. We're building the largest solar farm in the world, under a unique program called standard offer, which is helping

our farmers and small communities to sell power into the grid and make money for themselves—save money for themselves in the first instance and make money by selling us their surplus—and helping us develop and move away from the carbon-based economy to the green economy.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Tabuns is a true environmentalist, and I have a great deal of respect for his points of view. I wish that he could convince his leader, Mr. Hampton, to stop going to northern Ontario and telling them, “We’ll keep the coal plants open,” and going to southern Ontario and saying, “We’re going to close the coal plants.” I wish he could do that. I wish he would convince Mr. Hampton that the worst thing you can do for energy conservation is a price cap. You knew that when you were the executive director of Greenpeace. You did. You wrote to me. I’ve got the letter. I’ve got it framed.

That’s another thing. Our conservation efforts are working; peak demand was down. According to the chief conservation officer, yes, economic circumstances have changed, but our net power consumption is down. It’s working. It’s working when you go to every store now and you see the LED Christmas lights that are for sale. They last six, seven years, they use a lot less energy, they can work indoors and outdoors, and they really do save. They do. Our government—again, the NDP voted against this—provided funding to distribute energy-efficient lights.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Maybe Peter wasn’t here. I know he supports that in his heart. I know that. He is a good environmentalist, there’s no question about that. One cannot question the absolute integrity of the member on those issues.

We did have to make some difficult decisions around moving forward. We provided a 20-year plan that will see us invest some \$40 billion, current dollars, in a variety of power initiatives and conservation initiatives.

Mr. Bob Delaney: A balanced approach.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A very balanced approach. I can’t think of a better member than the member for Scarborough–Agincourt to implement that plan, to take it to the next level. I’m delighted he has the chance to do that.

It’s important that we move forward. It’s important that we have the debate and the discussion. We have said yes to nuclear power. Today, 50% of the lights in this chamber are run by nuclear power. For those of you watching on television, half of the power servicing your television comes from nuclear plants.

The NDP talk about jobs and manufacturing, but they have no plan for energy other than some whimsical idea where we just forget about reliability. Interestingly, when the NDP were in office, they got rid of all conservation programs. They didn’t build any new renewable power in Ontario. They didn’t do any of it, and we’re paying the price for that right now.

But, thankfully, Dalton McGuinty had the foresight to say, “Look, we’ve got to do better on renewables. We’ve got to move away from the carbon-based economy”—and we are.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Our power’s got to be reliable.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And our power has to be reliable. That is an important part of the future.

During the election, Mr. Tory said he’d do more nuclear and he’d do it faster. He didn’t say where he’d put them; he didn’t say how he’d convince the federal government—who are the regulator, by the way—to speed up the process. He didn’t say how he’d do that. I realize now there are probably differing opinions on that side about any number of issues and about that circumstance—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That would have been an interesting dinner, wouldn’t it, in Rosedale.

But let me say this: No government moved more quickly, more prudently and more expeditiously to ensure a safe, reliable and affordable supply of electricity for Ontario than this government and our Premier.

I see my colleague, the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, sitting here in the House with us today. I want to reflect on infrastructure for a few moments. I want to talk about ReNew Ontario, a huge plan. We’re seeing roads and sewers and bridges, particularly in rural Ontario, being rebuilt.

Let’s talk about Move Ontario 2020. Mr. Howard Hampton opposed that. Mr. Hampton and the NDP didn’t want to build the subway line. He said no first; then he got a little bit of heat from his Toronto members. Then he went up to Thunder Bay and said, “Yes, we do want to build it because we know the cars for the track may come from here.” He did say that. But our investments in public transit in the greater Toronto area are about the future. They’re about economic performance, and the money is well spent. Whether we’re helping Mississauga, Brampton, York region, Hamilton or Barrie, Ontario, all of that money is extremely well spent.

I think about our highways. We drive home every weekend to Windsor. On the QEW, long-awaited roadwork is being done—widened. The 401 at London, at Windsor—six-laning of the 401 from Tilbury to Windsor is halfway completed and will be completed next year. The Deputy Chair, who has now left the chair—Highway 3, which should have been built years ago, is being built, widened, in his riding. You go up the 401 and you see the projects happening because this government—

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What are some of the other ones?

Interjection: Highway 404, Highway 407.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: Highway 404, 407. The investments are being made, and do you know what’s good about these investments? Not only are they the right thing to do in terms of our infrastructure, but they create jobs. They create jobs. So this government is about investing in publicly funded education, public health care and

public infrastructure. The high school projects, the new schools—maybe some of my colleagues in a further part of the debate will talk about this. For the first time in 40 years, we're having a new high school built in my community—for the first time in 40 years. There are nine school projects in Essex county, and I'm really familiar with that. They're happening everywhere. They're happening all across the province. The Minister of Education can tell the House about any number of those projects that are happening in all of our ridings. I think of rural Ontario and those communities whose schools we're keeping open because of commitments we made in the past, because we recognize, in a small town especially, that a school is the heart of that community and it can keep that community alive and healthy even when there are other challenges.

When I think of rural communities, I think of our farmers. I want to say to our farmers today, particularly pork farmers, beef, dairy farmers and the horticulture industry, the challenge in the dollar is really affecting them. The Minister of Agriculture has met with them; I've had the opportunity to speak with some of their representatives. As we have in the past, we will work with them to ensure that they're not alone, because as the Premier says, and we all around here on this side of the House say, when there's trouble on the family farm, there's trouble for all of us, and we're not going to leave our family farmers alone to fend for themselves in this climate—more than \$1 billion in the last four years.

The Conservative members opposite want to get rid of supply management. That's what they've said. I heard Mr. Hillier, a member of that caucus. I've seen the debate going on in the House of Commons. That's what Conservatives are about. I look forward to hearing Mr. Hillier's views on those matters. I know there's division over there; I know there's a lack of leadership. Leadership matters, I agree, and I know there's a lack of it over there. So what are you? Are you in favour of supply management or against it? I say Mr. Hillier is against it. You say you're in favour. Fair enough. I take you at your word, but you have to speak as a party, and you have to be consistent. Let me be unequivocal: This party supports supply management and we'll stand behind all of our farmers as we move forward.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, you know, there they go again. You can hear the dissension. You know that it's a tough issue for them over there. You do know that.

As we move forward, this government will continue to balance its budgets. Do you know what? Three budgets in a row now balanced. I can safely assure this House that we can continue to balance our budgets, make our commitments, invest in public health care, invest in public education, invest in a cleaner environment and do it in a prudent and fiscally responsible way so there will never be another \$5.5-billion deficit, as was left by the previous Conservative government. That prudence is what gives us the ability to respond to situations like the one our beef and hog farmers find themselves in. That is what gives us the ability to respond when people lose

their jobs, whether it's in an auto parts plant or another manufacturing outlet. That's what gave us the ability to respond in northern Ontario with \$1.1 billion for the forestry sector. It's that prudent fiscal management that allows us to do that. That is what has allowed us to accelerate the elimination of the capital tax to July 10, 2010. That is what has allowed us to reduce business education taxes by \$540 million: prudent financial management. Unlike the previous government, we didn't have to borrow the money to fund those tax cuts. We did it with prudent management. We did it after we invested in public health care; we did it after we invested in public education. Those great tenets, public health care and public education with prudent financial management, are the hallmarks of the McGuinty government and will continue to be for the next four years.

Interjection: Never sold a highway.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes, we never sold—I shouldn't say "sold"; we never gave away a highway, the way the previous government did. There's a story. And the rates keep going up and up and up. We never did that.

We have a number of undertakings we're going to proceed with that we campaigned on.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Maybe we could keep the cross-floor debate down to a minimum. It's my first day on the job, and I don't want to get fired.

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I am enormously proud to serve on the cabinet committee on poverty in this province.

I had a chance to meet with Frances Lankin before the United Way report came out, and was fully briefed. I think we knew and understood a lot of it, but when you see the cold, hard reality that even in this great city, in this capital of our province, in this financial capital of our country, truly one of the great cities of the world, there are so many people not participating in that; when you see rural Ontario, whether it's in small towns or on farms, where poverty is still prevalent—small-city Ontario—I'm proud to be a part of a government that for the first time is going to set targets and move toward meeting those targets in a meaningful and realistic way. I'm proud of all we've done to date. I'm proud of the fact that we raised the minimum wage; I'm proud of the fact that we raised ODSP benefits.

There's more to do. But our Premier and his government, for the first time, looking at these issues at a systematic way, setting measurable targets to move toward—I'm proud of that, and I think all members of the Legislature should be proud of that. I look forward to working on that committee with my colleagues, both in cabinet and in caucus, over the coming four years.

The night is long. I am anxious to get on with approval of interim supply so I can get back to the ministry and start signing the cheques—this, again, is an important part of our parliamentary heritage, and let's not take that for granted. I remember that the last government did a budget outside the Legislature. They went to an auto parts manufacturer. Thank goodness we had a Speaker at

the time—a courageous Speaker—who understood the significance of this institution.

That's why I wanted to be here for this debate. Even though it can be viewed by those who don't follow it closely as a bit arcane, our system is a remarkable system. It's intricate and, in many ways, beautiful.

Somebody once said, "You don't want to see how either your sausages or your laws are made." But I can tell you that when you do your budget here in the House, it's fully transparent. That's why we passed the Fiscal Accountability and Transparency Act. We passed that so we can never have another hidden deficit like we did before the 2003 election.

One thing I should do—and I will do this more appropriately in my fall economic statement—is pay tribute to my predecessor, Greg Sorbara, not only a man of enormous character and integrity, but a friend, a mentor and someone who means a great deal to all of us on this side of the House. Let me thank him for the tremendous leadership he showed in this portfolio in the four years he was here and express the hope that if I can be even a quarter of the finance minister he was, I shall be a true success.

So we begin the next part of our plan. Supply gives us the ability to make our payments between now and, I believe, the end of July next year. The fall economic statement will bring the people of this province, and this House, up to date on where we're at and where we expect to be going. This coming spring, the budget will begin to provide financing to implement a number of our election undertakings. I look forward to working with all members of the House as we proceed down that path, as we continue to eliminate those deficits in public health care, as we continue to eliminate the deficits in public education, as we steward the province's finances in a way that will ensure balanced budgets moving forward and a fair and equitable distribution of taxes, and as we continue to stand up for Ontario. Whether it's in terms of the treatment of our workers under employment insurance or investments in the struggling parts of our economy or our struggle to make sure Ontario has a fair number of seats in the federal House of Commons, I look forward to that. I look forward to joining members of the opposition, and I most look forward to working with all of my colleagues on this side of the House as we proceed to implement all of the undertakings of the last election.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Good to be here in this House. I've spent a week here so far, so I'm really one of the new kids on the block.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You're an old hand by now.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm an old hand by now.

An interesting week it has been and very much living up to what I'd heard in the preliminary period—before we sat but after the election—about what this place might be, which is an opportunity to dialogue and exchange ideas. I would like to say, for myself and on behalf of my three colleagues who are the new members to the Progressive Conservative caucus, that we want to be part of an effective opposition, and I might say, in response to some of the comments of the member opposite, a united

opposition which the Progressive Conservative caucus is at this point—and going forward.

I heard a new acronym over the over the course of the past week: non-bank ABCP. I thought to myself, what's that? Well good radio broadcaster that I was—and radio broadcasters are engaged in making complex concepts simple—I went to the books and found out that it was "non-bank-backed asset-based commercial paper." I challenge all but a few people in this province to figure it out what that is on their own. Basically, it's mortgages that are not backed by banks.

I got to thinking, as we debated this over the past couple of days, that possibly the people who make the decisions on behalf of the government as to where to park money, hard-earned taxpayer dollars, were sick the day that the sub-prime mortgage scandal blew up south of the border, because a lot of this money got parked there. People don't even know what sub-prime mortgages are. The bottom line is we get a higher interest rate for going into investments that are not as solid as just going into the bank and getting a basic small interest rate. The bottom line is we lose money; as Ontarians; we lose money. What we don't know at this point is, did we lose \$100 million or \$200 million or \$300 million? It's yet to be seen. The bottom line will be the bottom line.

But money does slip easily through the fingers of this government, as do, apparently, jobs. Who suffers in the end? Who suffers as a result of this? The people of Ontario. So in simple terms, the number is yet to be determined, but it's somewhere in the \$100-million range. Oh, it might be a writedown, we hear. A writedown, in simple terms, is you lose the money. So did the people of Ontario lose \$100 million, \$200 million or \$300 million? We don't know, but they lost a significant amount, we lost a significant amount, and that amount could have gone to fund programs, programs that were proposed or programs yet to be proposed that we will not be able to do.

I want to talk about that in the context of what's up for debate tonight by way of the interim supply motion, because an interim supply motion is really about nothing more than ensuring that funds are in place to pay government workers, among other things. And it is important to see to it on an individual level in our homes, on a governmental level or in a corporate environment that money does flow to the people who deserve to receive it, in this case the employees of the government.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could ensure that funds allocated were always in place for any stakeholder, and it's to that that I want to address my remarks tonight—because they aren't. In my riding of Thornhill, I had the occasion recently to visit a very amazing special-needs school, a school that happens to be struggling, indeed struggling for its own survival, and it's called Zareinu. Zareinu is an interesting organization, as I say, in my riding, but not operating only there. I visited it because I heard that it was extraordinary and in some financial difficulty. What it's about is children with special needs, and it covers a wide range—infants all the way to 21. That's a tall order and it's a huge task.

Special needs in this particular case would be defined as children with physical and developmental challenges. I've got to say that it broke my heart, despite the very great progress that they make in doing what they do, because they operate in circumstances that none of us would wish to see in our own individual lives, much less on behalf of children who are incapable by any stretch of the imagination of speaking for themselves and who come from families that have a big problem making happen what has to happen for a normal child, much less a child with developmental difficulties. They suffer from insufficient funding, they operate in borrowed space in the basement of a synagogue. I got shown around for a couple of hours by a fine gentleman who is paid to do his work, but I suspect nowhere near what he's worth, a man by the name of Randy Spiegel, who is the executive director there. He told me where the funding comes from, and we'll talk about that in a moment.

The funds basically are derived on a public basis from fundraising to the tune of a couple of million dollars, a very small grant of about half a million that comes from the local CCAC to meet the needs of a gargantuan budget, and the rest, of course, comes from parents who either can or, in many cases, cannot afford it. But the cost is gargantuan.

The philosophy of the organization is rather interesting and I'd like to share that with you. They state their philosophy as dealing with so-called special children as valuable members of the community who have a right to receive an adapted education, opportunities for improving life skills, communication strategies and respect for their individual strengths. In other words, treating children with special needs in the same way that any of us would want to be treated.

They believe that a family is an integral part of efforts and family input is treated with respect. They believe in encouraging parental participation, in planning individual programs—and I'll interject something here that I believe. I believe that this represents an investment that creates a return. They believe that every child has potential, and so do I. I defy any member of this House or anybody at large to suggest that every child doesn't have potential, even children who are greatly disadvantaged compared to the rest of us. They believe in a coordinated, co-operative effort to develop and provide therapies and learning strategies that will improve the quality of life for each child and each family. They advocate for acceptance of children with special needs in the community. That's their philosophy, and a good philosophy it is.

So these kids are mildly to, in some cases, very severely challenged. Some children that I saw required as much as four-on-one treatment, where you have a youngster who is being seen simultaneously by a speech therapist, a music therapist, an occupational therapist and a physiotherapist. That costs money. These experts work for below what they should be paid. I saw offices that use shower curtains as dividers to separate one hard-working specialist from another. You can imagine the disarray in which they sometimes find themselves when two people are trying to talk on the phone with virtually no privacy

at all. Some facilities in the basement of the building where they operate are used despite not being available by way of any agreement; the hosts just look the other way.

I'm a lucky person. I got to raise two boys who are now two men. I'm a lucky dad because my kids never needed a wonderful organization like Zareinu. They were not developmentally challenged and grew up to be fine young men. I'm proud of them. But there are kids, sadly, who are born with moderate to severe challenges, and organizations like Zareinu try the best they can to take care of them.

I've got to tell you, this is life changing for both the parents and the siblings of children who attend an organization like this. Can you imagine what happens in a family when one child needs this kind of attention? What happens to the other children who don't need that kind of attention? The answer to that question is, no, you cannot begin to imagine it. I can't; you can't. The impact is financial, it is social, it is psychological and, in a word, it's devastating. Families are literally torn apart. Priorities are totally changed.

1650

Why have I chosen to discuss this today in the context of a supply motion? Because we're talking about money that has to be allocated. In this particular case, we're talking about this same thing because, in 1999, a Conservative government allocated \$14.5 million annually to special-needs children in private schools much like this one; "special-needs dollars," they call it.

But this government—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For medical issues.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Ah, but this is medical. But this government does not interpret the regulations with any technical latitude; it doesn't. So Zareinu and other organizations like it are sitting out there and suffering silently, and the kids and their families are being shortchanged. Only \$4.5 million annually is being spent. If you do the math on that, and you take it from 1999, since nobody has changed the line item, these kids are being shortchanged, and many like them around Ontario, to the tune of about \$10 million a year; eight years, \$80 million. Maybe it went into non-bank, asset-based commercial paper; I don't know. But the bottom line is, that money isn't there or at least it hasn't been there. The government has to understand that people are not numbers; they are faces. They're faces, and I've seen the faces.

I'd like to recall for you one little boy, a beautiful child, who in this House will remain nameless, with two siblings, I understand both totally normal. The parents have three children. This youngster is making progress, but at three years old I saw him in a walker. I noticed that he didn't talk either, but he does understand. I was able to get down on the floor and play with this young man. I'm happy to say, he's making progress because of this fabulous organization that just simply deserves more.

So when we consider supply motions, perhaps we also have to remember that elements of our population need their allocation too. They need supply. I'll repeat it once again: If you do the math, \$4.5 million out of \$14.5

million leaves \$10 million on the table year-by-year. You have but one organization in one riding of Thornhill that doesn't feel it's being shortchanged; as I say, they suffer in silence, but they are being shortchanged, and they're not unlike many organizations much like this across the province. We have to do something about that.

Our bureaucrats saved us \$80 million. Wow, \$80 million. Can you imagine what that could have done for Zareinu, for these kids and these families and for countless other facilities like this all over the province?

Yes, of course, we will approve the supply motion, but I wanted to call attention to fulfillment of our obligation as MPPs, government and opposition alike, to undertake what has been promised and not shortchange those in need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak again in the House. I have to say that as much as I disagree with the Minister of Finance—he's a tough, partisan speaker. An interesting speech, but I caution him—through you, Speaker—because I was around when Bill Davis got re-elected in 1980 and I was around when David Peterson got re-elected in 1987. There's a tone in there that you can hear, a tone of almost an arrogance, a feeling that a mandate has been put down on the heads because of the great virtue of the Liberal Party. I have to say that a government that starts speaking that way is often a government that is in trouble.

My intention is not to go on at length about that today. My intention is to speak about climate change and the lack of action on the part of this government, the very wrong-headed, very irresponsible lack of action on the part of this government. As you know and as you're well aware, right now in Bali, Indonesia, people from around the world are trying to negotiate a new climate deal. That climate deal is essential to our future.

In 1990, David Suzuki was talking about the state of the world's climate. He said at that time that we have about 10 years to actually do the things that will make a difference and allow us to avoid climate change. I remember there was a lot of criticism of David Suzuki at the time, but David was right.

I was interviewed by Bill Cameron in 2002 about climate change, about the impact of global warming. Cameron said at that time, "Well, you know, David Suzuki in 1990 was saying we only have 10 years, and yet here we are in 2002 and the world's going on." But in fact, even at that time, in 2002, the impact of climate change was real, the impact of climate change was recognized by scientists, and the impact of climate change was recognized by responsible governments around the world.

Today in the *Globe and Mail*, many of those scientists who in the early 1990s, and in fact in the late 1980s, were saying that you have to act now to deal with the first round—and we've lost that one—are now saying there's a much higher level of urgency to dealing with this issue. Now we have 10, maybe 15, years to actually hit a peak with greenhouse gas emissions, and then we have to start

coming down or we will see significant disruptions in the natural world. When we see those significant disruptions, we will see significant disruptions in our human economy, in our society.

I know from the comments he has made in the House that the Premier of this province is fully aware of those issues. This past summer in June, the Premier made a speech talking about the reasons that we should take on the understanding we have to have to address this issue. We need to go back to his words and then look at his actions. His words were fairly straightforward. He started out by saying that, first of all, there are familiar scientific reasons for taking action. To quote him: "Species loss. Habitat destruction. Extreme weather events. The threat to our way of life, perhaps even our survival as humans."

I don't think the Premier could've talked about or addressed this much more strongly. When you talk about the threat to our way of life, you recognize that we have a fundamental problem coming at us. When you talk about our survival, you're talking about a fundamental problem coming at us.

So first of all, he made a very strong, logical argument for action, and then he talked about a deeper moral reason to take action. He said, "Climate change is a crisis that we caused together, and a responsibility we all share, together."

"To reject that responsibility would be careless, reckless, perhaps even sinful."

That's a pretty strong moral argument. There's no question that Premier McGuinty understands the moral scope of the issue before us.

He then wrapped up with an emotional argument. "And our job right now," he said, "is to fight climate change, to make waste and pollution obsolete so we can ensure our kids have all the opportunities we dream for them"—pretty classic structure: logic, morality, emotion.

In the face of this, in the face of a threat to our way of life, to the future of our children, what are we doing? What should we be doing? If you, Speaker, if people in this House believe that our way of life is threatened, should we not be systematically planning to respond to that threat? Should we not be setting budgets, bringing forward policies, assigning staff at a level commensurate with the problem? I believe we should. If you believe what the Premier had to say, certainly we should be. Having brought forward a plan like that, we should be acting quite urgently to implement it. It makes sense to me: major threat to our society, big events, move quickly, mobilize the province. Remember the scale of the threat.

1700

This summer, the Premier talked about what he was actually going to do. He promised a reduction of greenhouse gases to 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, a reduction by 15% by 2020, and then 80% by 2050. And what was fascinating to me was that none of these are targets that will be met within the term of this government—not one. All of these were set for the future, so the pages who are here will be around, will be employed, developing families, when all this stuff is coming down and hitting our society. We're not acting quickly and setting targets

within this term of government. That's set, at the earliest, for 2014—no targets before 2011.

The government set out the different measures: closing down Ontario's coal plants—that's about half of the program—15% from transit investments and working on initiatives with the federal government.

I have to say that the Minister of Finance, who was here a short while ago, could speak at length about his confidence in the ability of the federal Conservative government to deal with climate or other environmental issues. My guess is he would be as generous as I am with that irresponsible government, yet this finance minister hangs a significant part of what has to be done to preserve our way of life on a government in which he has no confidence.

Some 15% will result from policies soon to be announced around home audits and incentives for municipalities, and the remaining portion will come from research and innovation into new technologies. That's not a plan; that's a statement of intent. That's a very general statement of things we'd like to do when we have a rainy day and we get around to it; that's not a plan.

You, Speaker, and other members of this House have seen the integrated power supply plan for electricity. I disagree with that document. I think the thrust of it is wrong, but it's a plan. It has megawatts produced, it has timelines, it has elements, it has policies, it has people who are charged with implementing it. It's a significant plan.

That's my opinion, but others in the environmental movement who deal with climate change had similar commentary when they spoke out, when they did their analysis, this summer.

The Pembina Institute—very well respected—the Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund put out a joint statement. The headline of their statement was: "The Ontario Climate Strategy: Reasonable Targets"—they're more generous than I would be—"But Where's the Plan to Get There?" In their comments: "The big question that remains is how the government actually plans to meet these targets" that I outlined to you earlier.

Prominently missing in action yesterday was any sort of overall plan to explain in detail how these targets would be achieved. I think that's pretty straightforward. There is no plan.

Those environmental groups went on to say that the phase-out of coal-fired electricity generation is the core of the strategy. Fair enough—the core of the strategy unveiled so far, providing just under half of the reduction. However, they go on to say that the coal phase-out strategy relies on the current Ontario Power Authority integrated power supply plan. It's varied a little bit, but is substantially the same now as it was when it was first brought out by the OPA. Unfortunately, at the foundation of the OPA's plan are some highly optimistic assumptions about the reliability of new and refurbished nuclear power plants. If the province's nuclear plants perform at their historic levels of reliability rather than the OPA's hopeful levels, it will be impossible to phase out coal by

2014 if the nuclear power plants behave anything like they've behaved in the last 40 or 50 years—40 years, I guess. So at the core of this wish list of action on climate change is a profoundly faulty assumption: The resting of this plan on a very weak reed, and that reed being high performance for Ontario's nuclear power fleet.

Beyond the coal phase-out, the Pembina Institute says that the plan suggested that 11% of the 2014 reduction target will come from federal measures to reduce emissions from industrial sources. Again, I'd like to have the Liberals in this House stand up and make it very clear to me that they have great confidence in the Harper government's commitment to environmental protection and that they have great confidence that Stephen Harper will really take on the climate issue. If you look at what's happening in Indonesia, where Canada is working with Japan and the United States to undermine progress, I don't think there are a lot of indications that you can give credibility to the Harper government on this issue. Pembina goes on: "Little detail has been provided in terms of actual policy measures to be implemented beyond these vague categories. Even less information is available about how the policy measures that have been identified have been translated into" greenhouse gas "reductions. There are also some very obvious gaps (e.g. the 17% to be accounted for by 'research and innovation')."

Very soon, it will be 2008, seven years to 2014. If you look at the development of the wind industry in this world, it took 20 years to really get the wind industry growing in a big way in the world. How do you expect in eight years to account for so much reduction in Ontario's production of greenhouse gases on research and innovation? We're talking about filler. They couldn't meet the target. They had to plug a number in. They had to put something in that sounded good and that's what they put in.

In 2005, I believe it was, this government passed the Energy Conservation Responsibility Act, which gave this government the power to make sure that clotheslines could be used legally in Ontario without any restraint by covenant. And yet this government, which says it's going to take on one of the biggest problems facing our society, can't even deal with the clothesline issue. How on earth do you expect them to deal with the transformation to a post-carbon economy if you can't deal with clotheslines? What answer can this government give when it's had the power for two years and hasn't acted?

We come back to the reality of a Premier who knows that our way of life is under threat and can be destabilized, and has not put a plan on the table for our consideration. In speaking about his approach, he said he would bring forward tough measures for accountability and transparency. Has anyone seen any evidence of such tough measures? When the speech from the throne came forward, was there any commitment to that? Was there any commitment to his other promise, that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario would be reviewing regularly the actions of this government to see whether or not it was meeting its greenhouse gas targets? Nope.

In the speech from the throne, the government said, or the Lieutenant Governor read out for the government, "Your government will move forward with Ontario's plan to combat climate change by working towards meeting Ontario's goal of reducing the emissions that contribute to climate change by 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% below by 2020 and 80% below by 2050."

1710

That's quite a presumptuous statement. What plan? There is no plan. No comment on those measures around the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario; no comment on transparency and accountability.

When I was waiting for the Premier to come out of his speech in June when he talked about his climate plan, I was talking to some of the reporters who were there, and one of the reporters said to me, "What's the reason this government's climate plan, this Liberal climate plan, is so short?" The answer is, they ran out of envelope. It's as simple as that and as straightforward as that. It's a back-of-the-envelope issue for this government. It's a marketing issue. So the question I have to ask you, Speaker, and all the members of the government party in the House tonight, is that if this is the way you deal with issues that are crucial to our way of life, how do you deal with the low-priority stuff? If this is the way you deal with something that could destabilize our society, what do you do about stuff you don't care about?

Energy in this society is not just a problem because of climate. Just in the last few months the International Energy Agency and a number of large petroleum companies in the United States have come out and said that over the next few years—in the next decade or so—there's going to be this gap between demand for oil and gas, and increasingly coal, and the ability to supply it. The historic experience with that, here in North America and around the world, is that when you have that big crunch on energy, you have economic disruption. We saw that in the early 1970s and we saw that in the early 1980s.

The world is changing. The old-energy world is moving on. We are not going to have the same availability of oil and gas in the future as we have had in the past. As some have said, the easy stuff has been accessed. The easy stuff has been taken. The time when we could just endlessly burn whatever we wanted to burn is now coming up against the time when the consequences of that pollution are having an impact on us. So we're faced with a dilemma, a conundrum: We need energy to function, and yet it will be increasingly difficult to get at and increasingly problematic in its impact on our world as we use it.

This government, the McGuinty Liberal government, talks about the need to move to a post-carbon world, but it is welded to the old-energy paradigm. That shows most clearly in their electricity plan.

The Minister of Finance was talking earlier. He used to be a Minister of Energy. The current Minister of Energy is here, sitting in the Legislature. When you look at the electricity plan that they brought forward, this is a

plan with a nuclear core. That is profoundly problematic for the finances of this province and profoundly problematic for the environment of this province. It means that we're going to be repeating the mistakes of the last century. Constant overruns: Again, Pembina Institute noted that the best-case experience with overruns on nuclear power since we started going nuclear in this province was the 40% overrun on building Pickering A. That was the best experience we had. The new nuclear power plant that's being built in Finland is already way over budget and way behind schedule. That isn't Ontario; it's an endemic problem with this technology.

We here in Ontario are still carrying the stranded debt, the unpaid bills from nuclear power plants that failed before the end of their design life. They were supposed to last 40 years; they last 20 to 25 before they have to be substantially rebuilt. Nineteen billion dollars is a concrete collar around our electricity system. People will look at their bills at home. You see that debt retirement charge? Call it the dead nukes charge. That's what that is.

When we look at going forward in this province, we're looking at repeating the mistakes of the last half-century, knowing full well what happened. No surprises here. If you buy a car that's a lemon, are you actually going to go out and buy another lemon? But we are. If this government has its way, if it is able to carry through to the end, we will buy another fleet of lemons, and that will have a big impact on our environment and our economy.

In fact, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario concluded just the other day that we, in this province, had made a fundamental mistake in not having a full environmental assessment on this nuclear-centred power plan that was brought forward. I saw him in the media studio. He spoke out. He was asked by reporters, "Should there be a full environmental assessment?" "No question."

My time is short, but there's a significant point that he made: The plans are based on a projection of growth and demand that is double our experience in the last 15 years. Set aside the nuclear power for a moment. If we dramatically overbuild generation capacity in the next 20 years, that alone will have a huge impact on our economy, on our environment, on our public accounts. We should listen, the Premier should listen, the Minister of Finance should listen, the Minister of Energy should listen to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, because he's right.

We are making decisions that are similar to those that were made in the early 1980s, when some companies were trying to decide if they should go with personal computers or typewriters: "Boy, those personal computer are pricey. Typewriters are so reliable and we're used to them." Some people made a mistake, but a lot of people realized, as we should realize, that you have to move on to the new world. Sticking with nuclear and not doing everything we can to move away from carbon fuels is a mistake.

This government is not behaving responsibly. This government is not doing what has to be done to protect Ontario. This government has to change course.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you for your contribution to the debate. Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. I listened with a great deal of interest to the remarks by the Minister of Finance, who had a great deal to say about his stellar performance and the performance of his government. As he rushes back "to sign cheques," as he put it, what I'm disappointed in is that if he were nearly as enthusiastic about ensuring that he performs his function as a steward of public funds as he is about rushing back to his office "to sign cheques," then we may have had some answers in question period today, yesterday, the day before, when we put questions specifically to the Minister of Finance about what is really a scandalous situation in this province, that some \$200 million, if not more, of taxpayers' funds have been lost, and they've been lost because the government failed to exercise its responsibility as a steward of public funds.

It relates to an issue that my colleague from Thornhill referred to earlier, and that is the Ontario Financing Authority's willingness and somehow their decision to invest in essentially worthless paper, a high-risk instrument of investment on behalf of the taxpayers of this province, in contradiction of legislation that prescribes very clearly the responsibility of the Ontario Financing Authority, which is that any investment that is made on behalf of the taxpayers of this province must be made in keeping with sound financial management on behalf of the taxpayers.

1720

So we have a situation now, while the Minister of Finance is running back to his office to sign cheques, that there is some \$200 million less that he can sign cheques for that could have served our province very well. My colleague from Thornhill made reference to a visit he made to a school in Thornhill for students with learning disabilities. How often has it been in the last four years that we've implored the government to meet the needs of autistic children in this province? On the one hand, the government says that no child should be left behind, that every child should have an equal opportunity for an education in this province, but somehow children with autism and other children with special needs are left out of that definition of this government's "all." Now we have a situation where the government has \$200 million less to allocate, whether it be to children with autism or children with special needs or other needs in this province, because of a lack of oversight on the part of the Minister of Finance, whose responsibility it is to ensure that the fiscal management of this province is in fact in accordance with very clear legislative prescription.

What is most disconcerting is the fact that instead of holding the Ontario Financing Authority to task and holding them accountable for their actions, the minister sets up a screen and comes to their defence and deflects and refuses to, again, do what is only the practical, the accountable, the right thing for him to do. That is, if he doesn't want to follow through on seeking what the answers are, he should be calling in the Auditor General,

which we've been calling on him to do—and, by the way, other jurisdictions have done exactly that. Where these kinds of investments have taken place, whether it's in the private sector or the public sector, those in authority, responsible people in authority, have called in an Auditor General or there has been an internal review. This minister says, "No; be happy. All is well." But the taxpayers are short \$200 million. It's irresponsible. I just want to put the government on notice that we will not let this matter go.

It took the government three months to finally agree to bring in the Auditor General when the official opposition made it very clear that the then-Minister of Citizenship and Immigration dealt inappropriately with some 30 million of taxpayers' dollars, the so-called Collegate affair. The Minister of Finance and the Premier continued to say that nothing inappropriate was done. Finally, after a great deal of pressure from this House, from both opposition parties, the government agreed to bring in the Auditor General, and what was the result? The result was that the Auditor General condemned the actions of the then minister, resulting in the resignation of the minister.

So I ask a simple question: Why would the Minister of Finance and the Premier not simply agree to have the Auditor General conduct his investigation, bring a report back to the Legislature, and if there was no inappropriate action, we would all know that? Let's clear the air. I'll tell you, if I was a member of the board of directors of the Ontario Financing Authority, I would want the Premier and the Minister of Finance to ask the Auditor General to do a report, and I'll tell you why: because I want my reputation cleared. I don't want to be seen as someone who failed the people of Ontario. I want the facts on the table. That is what I would want.

The question continues. When I have spoken with people over the last number of days, every day since this issue was raised in the House, the question that the average person has on the street is, "Why would they not want to have a report? Why would they just not get on with asking the Auditor General to table a report so that once and for all the matter is cleared up?" But no, they're not learning. They haven't learned from their mistakes. What are they hiding?

I submit to you, Speaker, that this government—and we saw the Minister of Finance. The arrogance with which he presented this afternoon is something to be seen. Arrogance comes before the fall. Yes, the government was re-elected, but that doesn't mean you no longer have to be accountable to the taxpayers. In fact, if anything, it should have humbled the government more so than ever to be granted the privilege of a second term and to go out of their way to be accountable to the taxpayers. The job of the official opposition is to hold the government accountable. We will do that on this particular issue.

Because today we are talking about supply motions and voting to give the government the authority to pay the bills of this government, now is the time when the government should be at its best in terms of accountability to taxpayers and in fact ensure that every action

they take instils confidence, not only on the part of taxpayers but on the part of every member of the Legislature in terms of how this government is conducting its business. They failed to do that. The minister failed to do that by his conduct this afternoon.

We'll hold him accountable. We believe that in the final analysis the Auditor General's report on this matter is the only way to clear the air. We'll continue to press the government to comply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member for his contribution to the debate.

Further debate? The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You look fine in the chair. As my first opportunity to debate in public in this session of the Legislature, I want to congratulate you and all of the other honourable members for their re-election to this place, and congratulate the McGuinty government for their re-election.

I know we're debating supply. There is no short supply of issues in my riding and that's what I intend to talk about for the time I've got on the clock.

Residents of Nepean–Carleton, who I thank dearly for re-electing me to this place in a very tough election personally for me—my dad passed away the first week. I guess you never really recover from that, but he instilled in me a sense of purpose. A few days after the election, my staff and I reassessed where we wanted to go and we outlined five priorities for my constituents. They were priorities that they told us about during a 30-day campaign and over the 18 months that they had me as their MPP after they elected me in March 2006. Those are two health-care related issues.

The first priority is getting a satellite health centre for the residents of south Nepean. In a fast-growing community like the city of Ottawa, and in particular south Nepean, where we've got one of the highest birth rates in Canada, a satellite health centre is of the utmost importance to my constituents. I'm pleased to be working with the Minister of Health's office on that. The Minister of Health himself has been very supportive of getting the satellite health centre built and in operation in south Nepean as soon as possible.

The second priority that I've outlined for my constituents is working on the foreign-trained credentials issue. It's one that I hope to work on in my riding with the citizenship and immigration minister and the Minister of Health, because there is a best practice in my community of Nepean–Carleton in the village of Manotick, where we've got a doctor who sits on the OMA. His name is Dr. Abdulla and he's been working with foreign-trained doctors in my riding to get them in the workforce. It's a best practice, one that I hope to share with you, Minister Chan, in the days to come and certainly with our critic, Mr. Klees, from Newmarket–Aurora, who is our citizenship and immigration critic.

1730

This issue came to light to me during the campaign when I was visiting a few of the mosques in my riding, as many of us were. I just asked a quick question: "How

many of you could be working in the medical field today with the credentials you had, whether it was in India or in Pakistan or anywhere else in the world?" Six people out of about 50 put up their hands, and I thought, "It would be great if we could work together to bring these folks into the workforce so that we can work on that doctor shortage we also have in Nepean–Carleton."

The third priority in the fast-growing community is one that the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will be very excited to hear about: the need for infrastructure improvements in my riding. As a fast-growing community, as I've mentioned a few times, there's a need for new roads, bridges and other infrastructure requirements. But I also have a large rural community where there are some rural water quality problems at Lynwood Gardens. I've been happy to work with the Minister of the Environment on solving that issue.

With respect to one of the critical infrastructure issues in my riding—and I've mentioned it in petitions this week: the Strandherd–Armstrong bridge and the need for that bridge to be built—presently, the city of Ottawa is asking for all three levels of government to commit to funding this \$105-million project. How important is that project? It will contribute to road widenings in a very fast-growing community. But more than that, it will link two communities which are so very close but are separated by the mighty Rideau River. I will be working on the \$35 million we're requesting from the province, and hopefully the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal will be able to step up to the plate and assist the city of Ottawa and the federal government, which has also come forward with their \$35 million.

Another issue that I hope to work on, and that I've already spoken to the Minister of Culture about, is preserving Dickinson Square. Many people here know the city of Ottawa. They know I reside in a part of the city of Ottawa. But what they don't realize is that the city of Ottawa is actually made up of parts of smaller communities and villages, and one of the great villages of this province is the village of Manotick. It was home to Ottawa's first mayor, Moss Kent Dickinson, and it was also home to Sir John A. Macdonald's first campaign office, if you can imagine that.

The city of Ottawa has made a commitment to make Dickinson Square a corporation, Mill Manotick Inc., which I fully support. I think it's wonderful that we would retain public ownership of such a natural resource and a great heritage site, not only for the city of Ottawa but for the entire country. It's one of those things we'll want to work with the province on so that we can see real results.

Finally, there are a few things that I worked on, and my fifth priority is wrapping up a few of these initiatives from the first 18 months that I was in office as the MPP for Nepean–Carleton. Two of them are actually building new schools, and I want to compliment the Minister of Education for putting up with me for 18 months and getting the Longfields/Davidson Heights school built. She knows how much I wanted that school in south

Nepean. That school now has been put out to tender for \$32 million. It's a secondary school that, in 2009, will start serving kids in my community from grades 7 to 10. I think there could be no finer example.

The other school I want built is Riverside South Catholic school. The fun thing about the Riverside South Catholic school is that last year—last June, I suppose it was—the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, put a halt on the building of the school. Do you want to know why? Why would the Department of Fisheries and Oceans be involved at all in Riverside South on a farmer's field? It's because they found some fish habitat on an old farmer's field because of a drainage ditch. We were almost at risk of losing that school, but we stood up. We worked to affirm it—all three levels of government, the officials elected at each level—and we resolved it. That school will start its construction this spring when the ground thaws.

The final thing is one of the things I'm most proud of. If I stop being an MPP, I can say, "We did it." That is the creation of the South Nepean Autism Centre. When we talk about supply in this case, when we talk about millions and billions of dollars, our eyes glaze over and we think, "What does that really mean?"

Last year, my colleague, a councillor at the city of Ottawa and my former New Democratic opponent in the city of Ottawa—we travelled to Belleville to try and get some money from the provincial government to start an autism centre. It was shot down; we didn't get the money. So we reassembled, and we actually did something that's so indicative of the people of Nepean-Carleton. We were self-reliant. We didn't decide that we needed a handout at all from the government of Ontario. Instead, we decided we would go to our community and create our own autism centre.

On October 2 of this year—actually four years to the day that the McGuinty Liberals broke their promise to kids with autism—we opened our very own South Nepean Autism Centre. Three women and lots of people in our community helped us to fundraise. We hit a fundraising target of \$38,000 in one night.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much.

Now we are serving 10 kids per session at this autism centre. That is what the power of positive connections can do, and that is what our role as members of provincial Parliament is.

To wrap up: a satellite health centre for my constituents; working with our colleagues here on the foreign-trained credential issue; ensuring that critical infrastructure in my community is built and improved. It's working on bringing new schools online and it's working to preserve Dickinson Square. That doesn't preclude any goals I may have as children and youth services critic here at the Legislative Assembly for the official oppo-

sition. I'll be working to try to put forward a children's bill of rights with respect to that.

I can tell you one other thing. There's one other priority. Poor old Stéphane Dion over at the federal Parliament can't make priorities but, holy smokes, I've got five local priorities. I've got one for my critic portfolio and I've got one here for all of the people who are sitting in their chairs right now. For every one of the 107 MPPs who sit in this place, I want to make this place family-friendly. I want you to work with me on that initiative because I'll tell you something—

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much. I want to work with all of you because we've got great friends here. It doesn't matter what corner you sit in. You've got Minister Fonseca over there who's got young kids. I want to make sure that his children and my children—Mr. Qaadri is over there with his kids, and they're beautiful. I saw them on the elevator. We want to make sure that this is a family-friendly place for all. My little girl's upstairs, but she stole a ball from one of the journalists, so I'm afraid to go back up there.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is not a gender issue, and it's not a partisan issue. It's an issue for each one of us. It means that the member from Guelph maybe will have a spousal association for her husband. It means that maybe we could have a gym for those of us who are here five months of the year. But most of all I think it means there might be a little bit more stability in this place because we'll be more reflective of the people we represent.

I'm out of time. I want to thank you very much for this opportunity. I want to have a spirited four years with my colleagues. Enjoy your evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing no further debate, Mr. Phillips has moved notice of motion number 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the Legislature the business of the House for next week.

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday in the afternoon—to be determined.

Interjections.

Hon. David Caplan: That's what it says.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order.

Hon. David Caplan: Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The House adjourned at 1739.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
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Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
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Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
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Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	
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Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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Monday 10 December 2007

Lundi 10 décembre 2007



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 10 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 10 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: Last Thursday, I attended a meeting in my riding of over 500 cattle and pork producers. What is clear to me is that the livestock farmers in this province, and in my riding of Sarnia-Lambton, are suffering, and the McGuinty government has to act before it is too late.

Livestock farmers are facing an increase in feed costs, a high dollar and new regulations that are hitting them hard. The pork sector in Ontario alone has farm gate sales of over \$4.5 billion and is responsible for over 33,000 jobs. This government knows that the pork producers are in trouble and is still doing nothing about it. How big does an industry need to be to get the attention of this government? The beef industry has over 21,000 farmers, and they have never been able to fully recover from the BSE crisis. Now they are facing new government regulations and a high dollar that is going to put many family farms in jeopardy.

In 1998, when our party was the government and the pork sector was facing financial ruin, we announced a program that had money in the hands of farmers within 40 days. This crisis has been going on for a lot longer than 40 days. What will it take to get this government and this Minister of Agriculture to do something? The McGuinty government must immediately work with Ontario Pork and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and quickly bring forward an aid package for the livestock sector so that our farmers have cash by Christmas.

NORVAL MORRISSEAU

Mr. Bill Mauro: It is with great sadness that I rise today to speak of the passing of one of Ontario's truly great artists, Norval Morrisseau. Mr. Morrisseau, as many of you already know, passed away in Toronto on Tuesday, December 4.

Jean-Baptiste Norman Henry Morrisseau was born 75 years ago on the Sand Point reserve in northern Ontario. Many of this Ojibwa shaman's paintings, which incorporate traditional aboriginal icons and legends, are considered masterpieces.

Achieving prominence as far back as 1960, Copper Thunderbird—Mr. Morrisseau's First Nation name—was

the recipient of the Order of Canada; the eagle feather, which is the highest honour awarded by the Assembly of First Nations; honorary doctorates from McGill and McMaster universities as well as other well-deserved honours.

In 2006, Mr. Morrisseau was the first artist of the First Nations to have a solo show at the National Gallery in Ottawa. Less than a month ago, Mr. Morrisseau was honoured in Ottawa by the House of Commons upon the announcement of his selection as the recipient of the 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honour bestowed on aboriginal people in Canada by the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation. He was considered the father of the Woodland, or Anishinaabe, school of art, a group of First Nations artists indigenous to the area circling the Great Lakes. Due to his efforts and his much-admired paintings, art critics and academics accepted aboriginal art, which had traditionally been thought of as merely craft work, into the genre of fine art. For his many artistic achievements he will be forever remembered as one of the most important artists to come out of Ontario.

HYBRID TECHNOLOGY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Just recently at the Los Angeles Auto Show, the General Motors Chevrolet Tahoe hybrid was awarded the 2008 Green Car of the Year; imagine that. The Tahoe hybrid, a full-sized SUV, has achieved considerable efficiency using GM's new two-mode hybrid system, and actually has the same city gas mileage rating as the Toyota Camry. This is important for Ontario's auto industry, where thousands of people are employed manufacturing larger vehicles, SUVs and pickup trucks that are purchased in great numbers to meet the practical lifestyles of Ontarians. This achievement by GM ends the argument that fuel efficiency and vehicle choice are incompatible.

This same technology will also be used in the new GM hybrid pickup trucks to be built in Oshawa next year, the first plant in Canada to produce hybrid vehicles. General Motors is also building the largest fleet of zero-emission vehicles with the Chevrolet Equinox fuel cell SUV at its Oshawa engineering centre. In addition, General Motors is working to bring new plug-in hybrids and electric cars to production in the next couple of years. General Motors Canada currently offers more vehicles with 40-miles-per-gallon or better highway fuel consumption than any other automaker.

Finally, I'd like to mention that I was especially pleased to be able to go green this Christmas at the recent

Oshawa Santa Claus Parade, where I participated in an Oshawa-built Chevy E85 Impala, which has the lowest GHG emissions of any vehicle sold in Canada while running on E85. Congratulations to General Motors and its workers for developing technologies to clean up our environment.

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Last week, the Toronto Star reported on Karl's Butcher and Grocery at 105 Roncesvalles. It has sold fresh sausages on the street for 46 years. Karl's has been forced out of business by this province. In October, the provincial government decided to enforce a harsh literal interpretation of the 2001 Food Safety and Quality Act. The act took Karl's out of the yellow-green system operated by the city and placed it under provincial regulations. According to these regulations, Karl's is now considered a manufacturing plant because it makes its own sausages.

The province is simply incapable of distinguishing between a local butcher and a factory slaughterhouse. According to Walter Jarzabek of Karl's, they decided they could not fight the province, so they decided to close just before Christmas.

We, as residents, are upset. This has enormous ramifications for a number of local butchers and restaurants. Just because a sausage comes out of a truck, that does not mean it's any healthier. I'm reading from a quotation by John Bowker on behalf of the Roncesvalles Business Improvement Area association which I've sent to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We are asking the minister, "Please act now to save hundreds of Ontario businesses."

AJAX AND PICKERING HEALTH SITE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like first of all to congratulate the Honourable Steve Peters on his election as Speaker, and Bruce Crozier on his election as Deputy Speaker. I also congratulate Ted Arnott, Jim Wilson and Andrea Horwath as first, second and third Deputy Chairs of the committee of the whole respectively.

On November 8, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, visited the riding of Ajax-Pickering for the official sod turning at the Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering hospital in support of its major expansion initiatives. With the provincial government assuming 90% of the capital cost of this project, residents of Ajax-Pickering should feel confident that George Smitherman and the McGuinty government have invested \$77 million into the redevelopment of the emergency room and a multitude of other vital services. Once completed, the Ajax hospital will realize 75,060 additional square feet. We are continuing to reduce the hospital wait times for those in need, continuously improving our health care system.

The major expansion is the largest in the hospital's history. It is also notable that this will mark the largest institutional expansion in the municipality's history. You can thank Minister Smitherman, the Ministry of Health

and Long-Term Care, and all of our great Ajax and Pickering volunteers for that. Minister Smitherman returned to my riding on November 27, spending the better part of the day—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Statements?

1340

FUNDRAISING IN SIMCOE NORTH

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I've often said I'm proud to have the OPP general headquarters in my riding, but there were two recent events that took place in the last couple of weeks that I wanted to bring the House up to date on and to thank the people involved.

Mr. Jim Stiles, the president of the OPPA, District 18, and Mr. Colin Wackett, the president of the Orillia Prostate Cancer Awareness Group, took part, along with Commissioner Fantino, in a presentation for the Ride for Dad program that's held every year out of the general headquarters of the OPP. Last year they raised about \$80,000 for prostate cancer awareness. That money will go to cancer research and awareness programs as well. Next year we hope to have the event on May 17 and expect that about 500 participants will help raise money at that time. Secondly, I also want to point out that Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD Canada, had their campaign kick-off for the red ribbon campaign, along with the kick-off for the RIDE program. I wanted to say that these are both awareness programs and they should save lives.

Particularly, I wanted to thank Commissioner Fantino, who has really opened up the headquarters for these types of programs so that the general community can take part in all these things that save lives. Commissioner Fantino should be thanked for that, as should all the participants who took part in both the MADD Canada campaign kick-off as well as the Ride for Dad cheque presentation.

PRIX DÉCERNÉ PAR LA FONDATION TRILLIUM

M. Phil McNeely: Je m'adresse aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée législative afin de féliciter le Rendez-vous des aînés francophones d'Ottawa, qui s'est mérité un des prix d'excellence remis par la Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario. Le RDA fut un des 25 organismes honorés lors d'une fête soulignant le 25^e anniversaire de la Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario. Ces groupes de bénévoles furent reconnus pour leur excellence, leurs idées novatrices et leur leadership dans leur communauté.

J'ai eu le plaisir de travailler avec le RDA et je peux vous assurer que leurs programmes et leurs services ont un impact des plus positifs sur les aînés vivant dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans. Fort de l'engagement de plus de 100 bénévoles, le RDA offre des activités telles que des clubs de marche ou des ateliers éducatifs.

Il m'a fait grand plaisir de travailler avec le RDA pour améliorer la qualité de vie des aînés d'Ottawa-Orléans.

Permettez-moi de féliciter de nouveau le RDA et leur président, Marcel Gibeault, le vice-président, Fernand Leduc, et leur coordonnatrice, Julie Lizotte, pour le leadership et l'engagement qu'ils apportent à notre collectivité.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I realize that you'll probably say this is not a point of order, but I would ask members to welcome to the Legislature Mr. Atul Mehra, C.A., president of Mehra & Company Chartered Accountants of Markham, and Mr. Hans Bathija of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member has obviously studied the standing orders and he has discovered that it is not a point of order. But, gentlemen, welcome to Queen's Park today.

HEALTH SERVICES IN MARKHAM-STOUFFVILLE

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm pleased to tell you that I recently attended an open house in my riding at Markham Stouffville Hospital to discuss its proposed expansion with members of the community. This proposal is a unique concept where the town of Markham will build a community centre, complete with library, immediately adjacent to the hospital to create a hub for health and wellness in the heart of east Markham.

Since 2003, the McGuinty government has provided to Markham Stouffville Hospital a 27% increase in base funding in addition to over \$18.4 million in one-time funding for new nursing positions, a diabetes team, a new MRI and replacement CAT scanner. This has resulted in significant improvements in wait times for diagnostics, hip and knee replacements, and cataract and cancer surgery.

However, as we move forward, there is more to do to enhance my community's quality of life. This government has recognized the growth in my riding and the need to expand acute care, mental health programs, diagnostic capacity and emergency department services. The hospital board anticipates receiving ministerial approval of its functional program this coming spring. This approval will be a crucial step in the process as we move towards groundbreaking.

OPERATION RED NOSE

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise in the House today to discuss an important and unique program that helps make our roads safer during this holiday season, called Operation Red Nose. It began in Quebec City in 1984 as a way to fight against impaired driving during the holiday season, and it has since spread across the province and country. This is a free, volunteer driving service that is open to all motorists who have been drinking or who do not feel fit to drive their own vehicle. The service is kept completely confidential.

To chart its success, you need only to look at the fact that in the first year, it helped to escort 463 motorists

home safely, but in 2006, the number was more than 4,613 people across the country. In total, since 1984, more than a million people have been kept off the roads to make sure that the roads are safe.

There are currently seven communities here in Ontario that provide the service during the month of December, from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m., on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and on New Year's Eve. In the 2006 holiday campaign, Ontario achieved all of its goals, resulting in zero crashes, zero injuries and zero fatalities during its hours of operation.

Donations are accepted and are given to local organizations supporting youth and amateur sport. Each year, more than \$1 million is donated to one or more recognized non-profit youth organizations.

I ask that the House join me in thanking all those volunteers who have helped make this program, Operation Red Nose, a success in communities across Ontario and Canada.

VISITOR

Hon. Jim Watson: Notwithstanding the fact that I don't believe it's a point of order, I'd like the House to welcome a resident of the great city of Ottawa, David Gourlay, to the chamber. Welcome.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Toronto-Danforth. Of course, you know this isn't a point of order as well.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, I'm following ministerial examples. Surely I'm on safe ground.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You'll end up on the front page of the Sun.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm hearing advice from some honourable members here.

I rise to welcome Donna Dillman, here today from Frontenac county, on the 65th day of her hunger strike opposing uranium exploration in Frontenac county.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): As you know, those weren't points of order. And just so anybody else doesn't feel left out today, we welcome you all to Queen's Park.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ACCESS TO ADOPTION RECORDS ACT
(VITAL STATISTICS STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT), 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ACCÈS
AUX DOSSIERS D'ADOPTION
(MODIFICATION DE LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LES STATISTIQUES DE L'ÉTAT CIVIL)

Mrs. Meilleur moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 12, An Act to amend the Vital Statistics Act in relation to adoption information and to make consequential amendments to the Child and Family Services Act / *Projet de loi 12, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil en ce qui a trait aux renseignements sur les adoptions et apportant des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll wait for my comment during ministerial statements.

1350

PATIENT-TO-DOCTOR RATIO ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE RAPPORT ENTRE PATIENTS ET MÉDECINS

Mr. Martiniuk moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to establish a yearly target for the patient-to-doctor ratio / *Projet de loi 13, Loi établissant un rapport cible annuel entre patients et médecins.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

The ayes have it.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: Today there are 1.3 million men, women and children in Ontario without a family doctor, and unfortunately, it's going to get worse.

Since 1992, all three governing parties have promised to solve the problem but have only made it worse. We now have less than half the doctors per capita than the United States of America.

This bill forces all governments to finally address this crisis by establishing an absolute minimum number of doctors required to service Ontario patients. This patient-to-doctor-ratio bill forces governments to meet a yearly target, and if they do not, all cabinet ministers would take a reduction in pay for that year.

Every person in Ontario is entitled to the services of a family doctor.

872440 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2007

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive 872440 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

FIRE PROTECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes / *Projet de loi 14, Loi prévoyant que le code du bâtiment et le code de prévention des incendies sont réputés exiger des détecteurs d'incendie, des systèmes d'alerte d'incendie interconnectés et des sorties de secours incombustibles.*

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask members to tone it down a little bit, please. Thank you.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Michael Prue: This bill is a very simple bill. This is now its third iteration. It requires that every residential building with two or more dwelling units is equipped with fire detectors in all public corridors and common areas of the building and interconnected fire alarms that are audible throughout the building.

The second part, which I think requires absolutely no explanation at all, is that every fire escape is constructed of a non-combustible material.

RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act / *Projet de loi 15, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: In the Retail Sales Tax Act there is a component for a fuel-for-consumption tax that's put on only in Ontario, the only jurisdiction in North America. This adds up to as much as \$7,000 in added tax for vehicles produced in Oshawa. In light of the recent 2008 statement that I just made, it's time that we eliminate this tax in order to assist the auto sector in moving forward and producing. While we have that opportunity, we should move forward in ensuring the auto sector remains strong.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that notwithstanding standing order 106, the following committees be appointed for the duration of the 39th Parliament and that the membership of these committees is as follows:

The standing committee on estimates: Mr. Craiton, Mr. Delaney, Ms. Mangat, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Rinaldi, Mr. Dunlop, Mr. Hudak, Mr. O'Toole, Mr. Bisson;

The standing committee on finance and economic affairs: Ms. Aggelonitis, Mr. Arthurs, Mr. Hoy, Mr. Lalonde, Ms. Pendergast, Mr. Sousa, Mr. Barrett, Mr. Arnott, Mr. Prue;

The standing committee on general government: Mr. Brownell, Mrs. Jeffrey, Mr. Kular, Mr. Mauro, Ms. Mitchell, Mr. Oraziotti, Mr. Bailey, Mrs. Savoline, Mr. Marchese;

The standing committee on government agencies: Mr. Brown, Mr. Flynn, Mr. Ramsay, Mrs. Sandals, Mrs. Van Bommel, Mrs. Munro, Mr. Hillier, Ms. MacLeod, M^{me} Gélinas;

The standing committee on justice policy: Mr. Berardinetti, Mr. Leal, Mr. Moridi, Mr. Naqvi, Mr. Rinaldi, Mr. Zimmer, Mrs. Elliott, Mr. Yakabuski, Mr. Kormos;

The standing committee on the Legislative Assembly: Mrs. Albanese, Mr. Balkissoon, Mr. Delaney, Mr. Dickson, Mr. Flynn, Mr. Sergio, Ms. Jones, Mr. Miller (Progressive Conservatives), Mr. Tabuns;

The standing committee on public accounts: Mrs. Albanese, Mr. McNeely, Mrs. Sandals, Mrs. Van Bommel, Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Sterling, Mr. Ouellette, Mr. Hardeman, Ms. Horwath;

The standing committee on regulations and private bills: Mr. Balkissoon, Mr. Colle, Mr. Craiton, Mr. Ruprecht, Mr. Sergio, Mr. Naqvi, Mr. Murdoch, Mr. Martiniuk, Mr. Prue, Mr. Miller (New Democratic Party);

The standing committee on social policy: Ms. Broten, Mr. Dhillon, Ms. Jaczek, Mr. Levac, Mr. Qaadri, Mr. Ramal, Ms. Scott, Mr. Shurman, Ms. DiNovo;

That all standing orders which currently apply to the standing committee on justice and social policy shall apply to the standing committee on justice policy and the standing committee on social policy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm sure I probably missed it, but on private bills, it was Mr. Prue and Mr. Miller?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes, Mr. Prue and Mr. Miller.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motion by the government House leader, Mr. Bryant: "I move that notwithstanding standing order 106, the following"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Dispense? Agreed. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forth a motion without notice concerning this afternoon's debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that for the purposes of this afternoon's debate on government notice of motion 12, up to 15 minutes be allotted to each recognized party to speak to the motion, after which the Speaker shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of the motion, and in case of any division the division bell be limited to 10 minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ADOPTION

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour introduire une nouvelle loi ontarienne relative à la divulgation de renseignements sur l'adoption, une loi qui, si elle est adoptée, permettra de moderniser considérablement le système ontarien de divulgation de renseignements sur l'adoption.

I would first like to welcome some guests to the Legislature today. Sitting in the members' gallery are Karen Lynn, with the Canadian Centre for Natural Mothers; Wendy Rowney, with Adoption Support and Kinship Toronto; and Monica Byrne, with Ottawa Parent Finders. They travelled all the way from Ottawa to be here with us today. Our guests are also members of the Coalition for Open Adoption Records. Bienvenue.

This legislation is important to our guests, as it is to so many Ontarians who have been involved with adoptions. The Access to Adoption Records Act, 2007, if passed, will enshrine openness in future adoption records in the province. It would give adult adoptees and birth parents access to identifying information in their adoption records and information about their personal past, which so many people have wanted for so long. If passed, the legislation will allow adoptees to learn where they were born, their original name at birth and the names of their parents, and will allow birth parents to learn about the child they placed for adoption, including their new name and where the adoption took place.

At the same time, our proposed legislation will safeguard the privacy of those involved in adoptions. People

who have their adoption orders made in Ontario before September 1, 2008, will have the option of placing a disclosure veto on their file. This respects the recent decision of the Superior Court of Justice and the views of Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. Anyone who chooses to use a disclosure veto would be asked to voluntarily provide their medical history so that birth relatives may be able to obtain personal health information.

Les membres de l'Assemblée savent que notre gouvernement affirme depuis toujours que les personnes engagées dans une procédure d'adoption doivent avoir le droit de connaître leur identité et leur famille, au même titre que les autres citoyens de l'Ontario.

Ontario has moved past the days when adoptions were conducted in secret and were kept a secret as the child grew up. Today many adoptions are open. Birth relatives and adoptive families know one another's identities, and birth parents often stay in touch with the children they gave up for adoption. This is a practice that reflects what child welfare experts have known for years: Adoptees want to know about their origins and birth parents want to know that their children are happy and healthy in their new families.

There is nothing more important than family. No matter who you are or whatever your situation, you should never be denied access to your history and your roots. That is what makes us who we are. It's time that our adoption information laws reflect the reality of our society, and we believe that it is in everyone's best interests to move quickly with these changes. I encourage all members of this House to support this important legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

ADOPTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: I think it's important to understand that the bill the government has introduced today exists for only one reason. It exists because the McGuinty government ignored the demands for privacy rights by thousands of birth mothers and adopted children.

When the original adoption disclosure bill passed this House, your government was told again and again in committee that you were about to violate the right to privacy of hundreds of thousands of people. The privacy commissioner told you your bill violated people's rights. Our party told you your bill violated people's rights. The Ontario Superior Court agreed with us and with those who wished only to protect their own privacy.

As a member, I know members across the House were inundated with emails, anonymous ones, from those who were afraid of this bill, and who had made an agreement with the government, which the minister has referred to as "in the past days," when adoptions were conducted in secret. That's exactly the point: These people had lived with this secret sometimes for 50 or more years.

The judge said:

"People expect, and are entitled to expect, that the government will not share [confidential personal] information without their consent.

"The protection of privacy is undeniably a fundamental value in Canadian society, especially when aspects of one's individual identity are at stake."

Birth mothers are lucky that they had the Charter of Rights and our courts to protect them from this government. It is a shame that it took a court to make you see the error of your ways.

You should have listened to the ordinary citizens who expressed their concerns, citizens such as the constituent of my colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who wrote that "for the very first time in my life, I am afraid. I am afraid of the government of Ontario's announced intention to abrogate the province's long-standing adoption law, a law that guaranteed the privacy of both the adopted child and adoptive parents."

Many of them could not speak to the committee about the bill because of their desire to protect their anonymity.

A woman wrote to our party to say that the "Liberal government is taking away my privacy rights by bringing in adoption disclosure retroactivity.

"I based my whole life on being told my file would always be sealed....It is unbelievable that they would go that far back to turn families upside down."

Another said, "I was promised this in a courtroom before a judge, represented by a lawyer, a frightened teenager who was still living the nightmare of an unwanted pregnancy.

"So when I was promised this while on the stand in this courtroom, surrounded by people more learned than me, was I supposed to know that this promise had no legal basis, and would be discarded so willingly by the government decades later?"

On this side of the House, we look forward to the discussion on this bill. If it contains the protection of privacy rights that the courts demand and citizens deserve, I am certain we will be able to support the bill.

ADOPTION

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: In the few seconds left, I think it's important to read the judgment of Judge Belobaba, who made it so clear that the government of Ontario probably has the least regard for privacy rights of all governments in not only North America but the world. The people of Ontario should be concerned with the posturing of Mr. McGuinty and his cabinet ministers on this bill.

Perhaps the greatest lesson from this particular piece of legislation is how important our Charter of Rights is. If it had not been for our Charter of Rights in Canada, we would have had a travesty in the breach of our privacy rights here in Canada, in Ontario. Thank God for the Charter of Rights.

1410

ADOPTION

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to start by quoting His Honour Judge Belobaba at section 178 of his decision: "I have come to this conclusion after much deliberation. No judge takes lightly his or her responsibility as a 'constitutional umpire.' No judge is eager to find that a law enacted by a democratically elected majority is unconstitutional and must be set aside. But our system of government is not based on majority rule alone. Ours is a constitutional democracy with an entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms that is intended primarily to protect individuals and minorities against the excesses of the majority. Included within the charter's ambit of protection are the applicants, who are part of a small minority of adoptees and birth parents that wish to protect their privacy. They have every right to do so. The applicants have established that their right under section 7 of the charter has been breached and the government has failed to justify this breach under section 1." That is what the bill is here for today.

I listened to what the minister had to say and I would agree with her that we have no option, given the judge's ruling, but to amend this bill. But I would state for the record that we are very surprised at the minister's statement, in which it is almost halfway through her statement before there is a single line indicating that there is a responsibility on this government to amend the bill in order to meet constitutional safeguards.

It is well known by members, or most members, of this House that the genesis of this bill originated not with the government but with a former member of this House, Marilyn Churley. I was with Ms. Churley on that day when the judge rendered his decision. I was with Ms. Churley when she first heard the news that a portion of the previous bill from the previous Parliament was ruled unconstitutional. I want to tell this House, and I'm sure it would come as no surprise to anyone who knew her, that she was visibly upset, she was disappointed, and she wondered what was going to happen. It being September, we were out knocking on doors; she was assisting me in my campaign.

But I want to go back to what Ms. Churley had to say or what she did over all those years. Ms. Churley was herself, as she has told this House so many times, a parent of a child that she gave up for adoption; a parent who agonized at that action; a parent who, for so many years, for two decades, sought in vain to try to find the son she had given up. When she finally found him, she vowed she would assist all other parents and all other adoptees in having an avenue and an opening to find their birth parents or their birth children.

She was diligent to the extreme in this. She first put forward a bill, Bill 88, in December 1998, which did not pass. She put forward a bill in June 2000, Bill 108; in June 2001, a third bill, Bill 77; in May 2003, a fourth bill, which was Bill 16; and in December 2003, a fifth and

final bill, Bill 14. It was all subsumed and all became part of the government record when the government eventually took up the cudgel and moved with what she had to say.

As I said, I was with her on that day when the bill was deemed unconstitutional in that respect. She was saddened, but she would want to tell this House that she wants the bill to continue. If it requires the legislative amendments that have been put forward today by the honourable minister, then so be it; it will be done. If it requires that in order to safeguard the lives of those before September 2008 who gave up their children for adoption, then so be it.

But I must state for the record that, notwithstanding that these actions are necessary in law, we believe in this party that all children have the right to know who their parents are and that all children have the right to know what those health circumstances might be. We agree that parents must be protected if that is what the law was at that time, and we look forward to the speedy passage of this bill so that parents and children both might have the full regard of a law that will stand up in the courts of this province.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE
DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, may we have unanimous consent for a member of each party to speak for up to five minutes regarding International Human Rights Day?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bryant seeks unanimous consent of the House for a member of each party to speak for five minutes regarding International Human Rights Day. Agreed? Agreed.

The Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's an honour for me to rise in the House today to mark International Human Rights Day. December 10 is the anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948, a declaration that enshrines rights and dictates that those rights should be shared by all nations and all peoples within them; defined a set of fundamental rights and freedoms as a standard to which we all must and should aspire; declares those rights to include the right to equality, life, liberty and security of the person; and also declares that discrimination should be prohibited when it is based on certain grounds such as race, gender, religion and national or social origin.

La déclaration a été l'un des premiers accomplissements notables des Nations Unies. Quelque 60 ans plus tard, elle demeure un instrument puissant qui exerce toujours le même effet sur la vie des gens dans le monde entier. La déclaration est devenue le document le mieux connu et le plus souvent cité dans le domaine des droits de la personne.

Ontario's own human rights system is based on the United Nations declaration. In fact, in 1962 Ontario became the first province or territory in Canada to enact a Human Rights Code, and I want to say that human rights and the protection of human rights has not been and should never be a partisan issue in this House.

It was enacted in 1962; it was strengthened again on several occasions by adding prohibited grounds, preventing discrimination in 1981 on the basis of the type of housing you inhabit; in 1986 on the basis of sexual orientation; in 1999 on the basis of whether you were in a same-sex relationship; and finally, in 2006, on the basis of age. Ontario has always had a proud history of leadership, and it is leadership based on who we are and where we have come from. Our strength has always been our diversity. Our strength has always been in the fact that we have people from different places, different cultures, different races and religions mixing and working together. Our strength is a recognition of that diversity. We are a society based on respect for individual rights and collective values, and we know that protecting both enhances the nature of our society.

I'm very pleased that over the next number of months we will be implementing a very significant change in the enforcement and the protections for those individual rights and collective values. On June 30, the Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2006, will come into full force to strengthen Ontario's human rights system. I want to say at this stage that I would like to thank my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Michael Bryant, for his leadership in bringing forth that piece of legislation, and all members of the House for the wisdom they have shared in ensuring that we have a strong method of enforcement. When it is fully implemented, we will not only strengthen individual protections by having a system that is faster and more effective but we will also enhance the capacity of the system to address systemic discrimination. Increasingly in our society, with its complexity, with its challenges, we need a system that can strengthen the ability to get at systemic discrimination.

1420

I want to acknowledge in the gallery today the chief commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Barbara Hall, and Michael Gottheil, who's the chair of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, and thank them for the excellent work that they have been doing on behalf of all Ontarians. It is excellent work that they are spearheading on behalf of us all, because we all recognize that we have a role to play. Apart from tribunals and courts and Legislatures, we all have a role to play in protecting human rights. There is no group that can do it more profoundly than a group consisting of all Ontarians, and we recognize that protecting another's rights, protecting another's system of values, is the surest way that we protect and enhance our own—again, a recognition of International Human Rights Day, the work that has been done, the work we continue today, and the work we will

do in the future in ensuring that Ontario is the place we all want to live in.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm honoured to rise to speak today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus concerning the international day for human rights. December 10 commemorates the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Its formal inception dates from 1950 after the assembly passed Resolution 423, which invited all nations to adopt December 10 in each year as human rights day.

The universal declaration inspired many human rights declarations around the world, including Canada's, and indeed Canada has a proud record on human rights issues. In fact, it was a Canadian from New Brunswick, John Peters Humphrey, who, as the first director of the human rights division of the United Nations Secretariat, became the principal drafter of the universal declaration.

Here in Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government under John Robarts enacted the Human Rights Code in 1962. Since then, significant progress has been made in the advancement of human rights in this province.

Sadly, this is not the case in many parts of the world today. Even as recently as this past weekend, at a Summit of Equals that was held involving leaders from Africa and Europe, Chancellor Angela Merkel said this about Zimbabwe: "The current situation in Zimbabwe is hurting the image of the new Africa," she said. "The situation in Zimbabwe concerns us all, in Europe as in Africa. We don't have the right to look away when human rights are being trampled upon."

Though our system of human rights compares favourably with the rest of the world, there's still much to be done in Ontario, and we can't be sitting back and resting on our laurels. This Legislature unanimously passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in 2005, and I commend the McGuinty government for bringing it forward. However, its implementation over the last two years has been, in the words of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act Alliance, or AODA, "toothless and disappointing."

We need to redouble our efforts to ensure that barriers are removed for people with disabilities so that they can participate fully in our society. Similarly, we need to ensure that our human rights system in Ontario remains accessible to all vulnerable people who need its protection. I would urge this government to allocate the resources necessary to the legal support centre established under the human rights reform legislation, Bill 107, so that no one needing assistance to bring a complaint involving an infringement of human rights is left behind. We need to remember that all of us as individuals and as members of our society owe a duty to our most vulnerable citizens.

In closing, I would like to quote Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said, "Whatever career you may choose for yourself—doctor, lawyer, teacher—let me propose an avocation to be pursued along with it. Become a

dedicated fighter for human rights. Make it a central part of your life. It will make you a better doctor, a better lawyer, a better teacher. It will enrich your spirit as nothing else possibly can. It will give you that rare sense of nobility that can only spring from love and selflessly helping your fellow man. Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for human rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind members that some of your conversations are a little loud. It's challenging to hear. We want to give respect to all the speakers on all sides. If you have a serious conversation, I ask that you take it outside.

The member from Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It is an honour to stand and speak on International Human Rights Day. Certainly in the spirit of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's words, I'd like to say that we still haven't got there; we still haven't gone far enough in Ontario. Last year, I submitted a resolution to add two little words to the Human Rights Code: gender identity. I know that Barbara Hall supported me on this; she wrote a letter to the Toronto Star. I would ask on this occasion that we might do this, we might add these two little words, "gender identity."

"What does it do?" you might ask. What it does is it protects the human rights of the most vulnerable in our community, and that is our trans population. Our trans population is still not protected. Today Égale was here, and I speak as well in honour of Égale and all the work that they do. So perhaps we might move on this.

I share my time with my benchmate Mr. Peter Kormos.

Mr. Peter Kormos: New Democrats join in this acknowledgement of International Human Rights Day. We understand it's all so easy for Ontarians and Canadians to point abroad at any number of places in the world where the abuse of human rights is flagrant, atrocious and totally beyond any rationalization. But at the same time as we look abroad and condemn those abuses and speak out on behalf of victims of human rights abuses, we certainly have to look within our community of the province of Ontario. It is truly sad that on this occasion we talk about the international day for human rights when this government, just within the year, through Bill 107 abolished—dismantled—the Ontario Human Rights Commission as an advocacy group here in the province of Ontario. The government privatized human rights advocacy. While I understand that a wealthy person who then becomes the victim of a human rights abuse is entitled to hire lawyers and use the tribunal and hire investigators, I also point out that it is the rare occasion when the Mercedes-Benz or the Porsche set find themselves to be victims of human rights abuses. In fact, it's far more often than not new Canadians, low-income Canadians, poor Canadians, working women and men in their workplaces.

Speaking of workplaces, for this government to stand up and talk about wanting to participate in the acknowl-

edgment of the international day for human rights yet to still deny agricultural workers in this province the right to belong to a trade union and form a collective bargaining unit so they can bargain freely with their employers I find a little bit amazing. Agricultural workers, working in some of the dirtiest, most dangerous jobs in our province, earning some of the lowest wages in our province, are still denied by this government the right to belong to a trade union and to freely collectively bargain. I would find it easier to listen to the minister and his comments were this government at the same time announcing legislation to introduce agricultural workers to the world of free collective bargaining. It's difficult to participate in an acknowledgment of the international day of human rights with this government when this government denies the vast majority of workers in this province the right to join a union and form a collective bargaining unit by virtue of card-based certification, giving that prerogative, that privilege, to but a small group of workers here in the province of Ontario.

Unionized workplaces are safer workplaces. Unionized workplaces are ones where there's more job security. Unionized workplaces are more productive. Yet this government is effectively denying some of the poorest workers in this province—the Wal-Mart workers, the workers in the hospitality sector, the people who do the cleaning and some of the heaviest lifting and some of the dirtiest jobs for the lowest pay—the right to belong to a union because it won't extend to them the opportunity to form a union local on the basis of card-based certification.

So here we are, joining together arm-in-arm and crying out against human rights abuses internationally and calling for an end to those human right abuses, yet we as a Legislature are in a province that persists in denying fundamental, basic human rights to so many of its own citizens, to so many of its own residents. I say if this government is going to be believed around issues like this, it would be well advised to put its own house in order first and to start addressing the human rights of Ontarians before it starts announcing its interest in solidarity in the attack on human rights internationally.

1430

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like all members to welcome some special guests of mine in the Speaker's gallery today: Jeff Pedler, Craig Bradford, Suzanne vanBommel, Carrie Snyders, Merle McCallum, Scott Anderson, Wendy Farmer, Carole Watson, Kim Davis, Darin Harris, my brother, Joe Peters, his children, Olivia and Nicholas, and, most importantly, my mother, Joan. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'll be sure to be on my best behaviour.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm sure because my mother is here—I heard the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—everyone will be on their best behaviour today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PAROLE SYSTEM

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I have a question for the Premier. Premier, I'm sure you've been briefed on a public safety matter that concerns all Ontarians, but particularly downtown Toronto residents with children. I'm referring to the transfer of Christopher Goodwin to the Keele Centre in Toronto, as reported in the Toronto Sun on Saturday. According to this article, Goodwin is a notorious pedophile, a repeat child molester who, according to the National Parole Board, remains a high risk for reoffending.

Premier, can you confirm that this notorious pedophile is now residing in the Keele Centre in Toronto, and if he is, do you have any concerns?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I refer this to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The release of any federal offender is the responsibility of the Correctional Service of Canada and the National Parole Board. If the leader of the official opposition has any questions with regards to the release of any federal offender, he should be contacting the Correctional Service of Canada.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Boy, I guess the minister is not concerned about a high-risk individual being secretly dropped into a neighbourhood with five schools and 10 to 20 daycares.

Mr. Goodwin has been released from custody, designated as a long-term offender, and placed under a supervision order by the National Parole Board, an order that has no electronic monitoring and tracking requirement and only a six-month residency requirement that sticks him in the Keele Centre right here in Toronto. Ontarians—parents and children—deserve greater vigilance in this. So my question now to the minister is, can he tell us if his officials were even aware of this high-profile case and confirm that they had in fact made submissions to the parole board prior to Mr. Goodwin's release?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me speak about what we do in Ontario and then the leader can do whatever he wants with regards to the comparison. In Ontario, the Parole and Earned Release Board and Ontario's correctional officials make release decisions that put community safety first. That means that in Ontario, those whom the board considers dangerous don't get paroled. That means that in Ontario, those who are considered dangerous get don't get temporary releases from jail. I have to be perfectly honest, Mr. Speaker. If he has any concerns about the federal system, he should talk to the Correctional Service of Canada. In Ontario, this ministry and this government put community safety first.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: In terms of community safety, this is unbelievable negligence on the part of this minister and his government.

Some time ago, the National Parole Board attempted to place Mr. Goodwin in a halfway house in Kingston, but the community uproar forced them to back off and he completed his sentence.

Minister, the reality is that you and your government dropped the ball on this. You were asleep at the switch and we now have a repeat child molester, unmonitored, walking the streets in Toronto. Your government was not alert and proactive in making this case a priority. You had the opportunity to appear before the parole board. You should have put Ontario's concerns and recommendations to them.

Mr. Goodwin is clearly a dangerous man. In six months, he will walk out of Keele Centre a free man likely to reoffend. What steps, Minister, are you and your government taking to protect the public, especially children, from this walking menace?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The Police Services Act allows the police to disclose public information on offenders in their community when reasonable grounds exist to believe that the offender poses a significant risk to public safety. The decision on whether to do a public notification—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Excuse me. Stop the—no, keep the clock running. Did I hear what I thought I heard you say, or did you—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You must have misunderstood me.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Okay. Because I thought you used some profanity.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, I didn't, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Okay. Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me reinforce that the decision on whether to do a public notification is up to the police. They are in the best position to determine the risks posed by an offender, and they are aware of the law enforcement needs of their community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question? The leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The reality is, the Ontario government has the right to appeal to the federal parole board to vary the order to have such things as electronic monitoring applied.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Again, a question to the Premier: At the same time that people are concerned about sex offenders being dropped into their midst, we're also hearing about the misuse of funds designated for the sex offender registry in Ontario. According to a story in Saturday's National Post, tomorrow's report from the Auditor General is expected to mention that under former OPP Commissioner Gwen Boniface, money was diverted by the OPP from the province's sex offender registry into other police initiatives.

Premier, can you tell us how much money was diverted, what impact the removal had on the operations of the registry, and what knowledge or involvement your government had with respect to the diversion of these monies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me say that, first of all, we believe that the Ontario sex offender registry is an important tool for our police. Christopher's Law was important legislation. It's legislation that had been put forward under the previous government, and that I myself supported. They tell me that police access the registry now more than 400 times a day, which reinforces how important a tool it is for them.

I'm not going to prejudice the Auditor General's report, but I can say that I've read that same story. It has presented me with some significant concerns, obviously. I look forward to getting more details from the Auditor General's report and, I think more importantly, the recommendations that flow from that.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think we all know that the government has had the Auditor General's report for some time and has had an opportunity to respond in terms of concerns. Also, there was a second part to my question with respect to any knowledge or involvement your government had with respect to the diversion of those monies.

We know that the OPP is faced with tremendous financial pressures. Caledonia has to be the most significant. At last count, 124 OPP officers were taken off patrol in other areas of the province to police Caledonia because of your failure to deal appropriately with the issues in that community.

Premier, I'm going to ask you again: Where did the money go, what other police initiatives did it cover, and for what period of time were you failing to properly monitor and track registered sex offenders?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I refer it to the minister.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, let me correct the record of the member over there when he says that the OPP has been starved of cash. The OPP's budget has risen \$155 million over the course of the last four years.

But let me also make it abundantly clear that there is a process in place with regard to the release of Auditor General's reports. We will respect that process. We will allow the Auditor General to make his submission tomorrow without comment until that time.

1440

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think it's appropriate to ask today with respect to the involvement and knowledge the government had with respect to diversion of monies from a tool that I think most Ontarians would feel is critically important in terms of monitoring the movements and whereabouts of sex offenders in the province of Ontario. If the OPP felt they had to divert monies from such an important tool while at the same time this government is handing \$32 million out the back door to its Liberal friends, there's something wrong in the province of Ontario with this government in terms of its approach to policing, in terms of its approach to community safety.

So I ask you once again: What happened to the sex offender registry during this period of time, where did those monies go, and what involvement did your government have in that decision?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, let me reinforce what I said in the previous answer: We are going to respect the process. The Auditor General will release his report tomorrow. We will comment after that report has been tabled here in the House.

But let me make it abundantly clear: The OPP has not been starved for funds over the course of the last four years. There has been an increase of \$155 million in the operating budget for the OPP.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Ontario is losing literally thousands of manufacturing jobs every month under the McGuinty government. Workers, communities, and companies want to see meaningful, concrete action from the McGuinty government to sustain Ontario's manufacturing jobs, not more superficial photo ops. Premier, in Thursday's economic statement, will we see any meaningful, concrete action from the McGuinty government to sustain manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. The leader of the NDP, of course, implies that our new, next generation jobs fund of \$1.15 billion does not constitute real and meaningful action. We see it differently. Our half-billion-dollar auto sector fund leveraged \$7 billion worth of new investment; we see that as significant and meaningful as well. We also have money that we put in place to support our forestry sector, our advanced manufacturing sector and so on and so forth, but we do also recognize that there is more that we can do, and we look forward to speaking to that in some detail later this week.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Just about everything the Premier mentioned in his effort to avoid the question has been announced before, and since those announcements, tens of thousands of jobs have been lost. So mentioning old news is certainly not concrete, meaningful action.

I want to quote from the Timmins Chamber of Commerce, which recommends, in a release of only a few months ago, that the provincial government set an industrial hydro rate of "\$45 per megawatt hour for manufacturers in order to attract and retain businesses." They quote, "At the present time, hydro prices are 40% less expensive in Quebec and 60% lower in Manitoba. The chamber of commerce is concerned that existing enterprises will relocate their manufacturing operations as a cost-saving measure."

My question: Will we see any meaningful, concrete action on the issue of an industrial hydro rate that allows manufacturers to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can understand the leader of the NDP's interest in these issues, but obviously I'm not prepared to disclose the contents of our fall economic

statement here today. But I can say that I know that the leader of the NDP recognizes that Manitoba and Quebec have been blessed by Mother Nature in a way that we here in Ontario have not been when it comes to our geography and our hydroelectric potential. We are doing what we can to expand capacity at Niagara Falls. We are doing what we can to expand opportunities through our run-of-the-river untapped resources. But I can say that at the same time, we've determined that it's important for us to have in place a hydro pricing policy that is manageable, that is affordable, that's effective and that is responsible not just to our generation but those yet to come. We have tried to bring in place a hydro pricing policy that is removed from the hands of the politicians and that speaks to our continuing responsibility to ratepayers, not only those today but those yet to come.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, what the Premier has done is create the Ontario Power Authority, which isn't even responsible to this Legislature; an Ontario Power Authority that is stacked with Liberal political appointments. So if anything, hydro rates are more political than ever before.

But again I want to quote from the Timmins Chamber of Commerce: "It is estimated that a large consumer, such as Timmins-based Xstrata Copper, could save \$40 million annually by moving their refining operations to Quebec. This would have a catastrophic effect on the northeastern Ontario economy with a loss of 4,000 to 5,000 jobs."

I hear the Premier talking about all kinds of things other than a response. What these workers want to know and what these companies want to know is, is there going to be some concrete and specific action to deal with the problem of escalating industrial hydro rates in Ontario, something which is killing jobs? Yes or no, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I really think I have answered that question, and I'm not going to disclose details of our fall economic statement here, today and now.

What I have heard from those workers who have unfortunately lost their jobs—and those job losses are occurring right across Canada and throughout the United States of America when it comes to the manufacturing sector in particular, as well as some in the agriculture and forestry sectors. But insofar as Ontario workers are concerned, they are particularly upset by the fact that they are getting about \$4,000 less, on average, than Canadians who lose their jobs in other parts of the country.

I would say to the leader of the NDP: We would appreciate his support in this regard if he could speak out to his federal colleagues and remind them of the discrimination that is hurting Ontario workers who lose their jobs. If we had, here in Ontario, received that extra \$4,000 per employee last year, Ontario workers—not the government—would have received \$1.7 billion more in benefits. I think that is unfair and I would appreciate the leader of the NDP's support when it comes to standing up to the federal government and speaking out on behalf of the interests of Ontario workers.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: I thank the Premier for pointing out the injustice that his Liberal brothers have delivered to unemployed workers in Ontario. It's something that Liberals should have taken care of.

Yesterday, thousands of citizens marched to protest conditions at the McGuinty government's profit-driven, corporate-consortia hospital in Brampton. My question is simply this: When will the Premier stop passing the buck and stop trying to force the local board to take responsibility, and call an inquiry to address the overwhelming public concern that continues to develop in Brampton with respect to this profit-driven, corporate-consortia hospital?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Health is going to want to speak to this shortly, and I'll give him the supplementaries, but let me just say this. First of all, I disagree wholeheartedly with the leader of the NDP's characterization that any challenges connected with this hospital somehow stem from the financing mechanism. I simply dismiss that. It is not credible.

Having said that, there are some concerns that have been expressed by members of the community, and I think we have a responsibility to find a way to address those concerns. I think it's fair to say that in some quarters there has been a loss of confidence in their community hospital. We have worked hard to put in place a new hospital. We have over 110 more beds than used to be there and 120 more beds are coming, but obviously we have not yet found a way to inspire confidence in the community in their new hospital. The Minister of Health will be speaking to that momentarily.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier talks about more beds. In fact, there are fewer beds than were promised to the people of Brampton. That is one of the issues, and that is one of the issues tied to profit-driven hospitals. My question is simply this: Can the Premier explain why thousands of citizens took to the streets in Brampton and are calling for the reopening of the aging Peel Memorial Hospital? Can you explain why thousands of people are raising these serious concerns, when you say that your new profit-driven, corporate consortia hospital is state of the art? Why would they be out in the streets marching if, indeed, your new hospital is state of the art?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: Evidence of the quality of the building and the equipment there is offered in testimony by many. It is only the honourable member, best as I can tell, who asserts that the patient care issues there are a result of whether there is a mortgage on a brick or not. It's only him in his privileged spot, I suppose, that lives without a mortgage.

1450

We felt it was important to make this long-standing investment in the Brampton community, but we share concerns that have been expressed that the requisite level of confidence is not established there. We have an in-

investigator on site, Mr. Ken White; he'll be assuming even more vigorous duties. I will be writing today to the hospital board indicating the government's intention to move forward with the appointment of a supervisor, which will establish an even greater presence on the part of the government in ensuring that the circumstances there, which are a perception of poor quality of care, are addressed in a forthright manner. We'll make this a very, very urgent priority, I can assure all members of that community.

Mr. Howard Hampton: In Brampton we have thousands of citizens in the street raising issues. But it's not just Brampton. The Premier also promised that the Royal Ottawa Hospital, which the Conservatives proposed as a profit-driven hospital, would not be a profit-driven hospital. But today, under the McGuinty Liberals, it is a profit-driven, corporate-consortia hospital. One of the things they're doing is, immediately adjacent to the in-patient services, they are now renting out space to a private, profit-driven clinic that is charging patients up to \$7,500 for certain procedures.

Can the Premier explain where profit-driven private clinics that charge patients up to \$7,500 fit into a public not-for-profit medicare system?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm very pleased to speak to the model which is seen in both the Brampton and Ottawa communities, unlike the record of my honourable friend when, for five years, he was on the world's longest bathroom break, when no hospitals were built in the province of Ontario. Instead, in both the Ottawa and Brampton communities, we have long-awaited, publicly owned, publicly controlled and publicly accountable hospitals.

I can say to the honourable member, as was the case when his party was in office, hospitals will, in ancillary space from time to time, lease that space to Burger King in some circumstances and the operators of clinics in others. This most assuredly is the explanation with respect to the space that the honourable member asks about in Ottawa. But at the heart of it, unlike the honourable member's record on this, the Ottawa community and the Brampton community have very tangible evidence of the government's commitment to their circumstances with gleaming new hospitals.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier regarding the potential \$200-million loss of taxpayers' money in the risky McGuinty government investment scheme: As you know, other jurisdictions are investigating who was advising government to make these risky investments in the first place and taking real action. For example, in the state of New York, the Attorney General has subpoenaed private companies to see if they were selling these risky investments at the same time they were divesting their own holdings.

Premier, please inform the assembly, what real and effective action have you taken to get to the bottom of

this mess? Because simply shrugging your shoulders doesn't cut it when it comes to the loss of \$200 million.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Perhaps the honourable member has some backing for that \$200-million cost that he has thrown out there, but that's the first time that I've heard it. If he has some information that he'd like to share with us, then I'd be only too pleased to receive it.

I read some more this weekend in a number of financial papers from across North America about these asset-backed commercial paper losses which have affected a number of banks and financial institutions, credit agencies and the like. I think I made it clear last week, as did our Minister of Finance, that Ontario too was caught up in this. The writedown, I'm told, will be less than \$100 million out of \$720 million. That will be fully offset by in-year savings on our interest on debt cost, so that there will be no net impact on our bottom line.

I'm also advised, as the honourable member knows, that this is the kind of investment that has been made for a number of years now. A number of organizations have been caught up in this, and we will do everything we can to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier well knows that the difference between Ontario's approach and other jurisdictions is that other areas are taking real and decisive action while the Premier of the province of Ontario shrugs his shoulders and says, "Don't worry, be happy."

Let me give you three suggestions, Premier, you could immediately follow. First of all, would you rescind your November 2004 order in council that allowed for these risky investments in the first place? Secondly, will you pass a new order in council requiring investments to be rated by at least two bond rating agencies before investing taxpayers' money into it? Thirdly, will you call in the Auditor General to get to the bottom of this mess?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to repeat for the benefit of the member, and I think he knows this, that this kind of investment has been made for a number of years by a number of different governments of various political stripes. I know that the Minister of Finance and his officials within the ministry itself are now taking steps to ensure that this does not recur. I think it's the same kinds of steps that have been taken and are being taken in so many other organizations throughout North America—indeed, if not in Europe as well. I know as well that he looks forward to making a public statement about the nature of the changes we are making there to ensure that what governments of all previous stripes have done before is not repeated.

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. It's a very simple one: Will the minister commit to restoring the core funding

cut from women's shelter budgets between 1995 and 2004 in Thursday's economic statement?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I'm not going to anticipate what will be in the statement by the Minister of Finance this coming Thursday.

One thing I can tell you is that this government believes that one of the most fundamental rights is the right of safety and security in our own communities. So we are committed to increasing the safety of abused women and their children by providing safe shelters, crisis counselling and other important supports so that they can live free from domestic violence. That's why my ministry invests \$122 million annually in programs that help reduce domestic violence. That's a 27% increase over the 2003 funding.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is the minister who today on CBC Radio said that she didn't know anything about hundreds of women who are spending their nights in homeless shelters because there's no space for them. There's no space for them because this government won't pay its bills to the city of Toronto. So I ask you again: Will you start forwarding the city of Toronto the money that they've spent covering provincial shortfalls?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This government is well known to work very co-operatively with our partners at the municipal level. For Toronto, we fund 390 violence-against-women beds in 13 shelters. We know that the occupancy rate averages about 86% across the Toronto system. So there is a coordinated access mechanism in place to refer women to violence-against-women shelter beds in Toronto and across the province. Women who are in need of support can call the Assaulted Women's Helpline, a 24-hour provincial crisis and referral service, funded by my ministry, that can help direct those in need to the appropriate supports. Our government also introduced a domestic violence action plan which is providing more than \$82 million over four years.

SECURE DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is directed to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, when our government announced a finish date for our new, secure driver's licence, there were some skeptics, particularly from the opposition benches, who said that the secure piece of identification would not be ready by the end of the year. In fact, some in the opposition said it wouldn't be ready even for next year. I know that the security of Ontario is a priority of our government. Would the honourable Minister of Transportation please update the assembly and the people of Ontario as to when these new, secure driver's licences will be issued? Also, please outline some of the new security features in the new, secure driver's licences.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the member very much for a very insightful question. I would like to inform the House as well that I was pleased to announce on Friday that the new, more secure, enhanced-security driver's licence is being produced by the province of On-

tario. It's newer; it's safer; it's more secure. In fact, the new cards were being issued last week and, as of Friday, we've issued over 15,000.

We've taken significant steps to enhance the integrity of the driver's licence card and the process of issuing it. The new card will set the standard for driver's licence security right across Canada. By incorporating leading-edge security features such as laser-engraved photos, signatures and personal information, a fine-line background, 2D barcode and ultraviolet features, we have made fraudulent Ontario driver's licences easier to detect and licences more difficult to tamper with. We've also increased the protection of personal data on the card to better protect an individual's personal information.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Mr. Minister, I appreciate your answer. First, I want to congratulate yourself and your predecessor, the former Minister of Transportation from Etobicoke Centre, for this on-time delivery. Knowing this government has met the target date for the new secure driver's licence, I'm hoping the minister would be able to tell this House, and in particular my constituents in the border communities of Fort Erie, Niagara Falls and Niagara on the Lake, and the people of Ontario, when we can expect to use this new secure licence as an official document to cross the border.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again an excellent question. I wish to inform the constituents of the member from Niagara Falls and throughout Ontario that when crossing into the United States, along with more than half a dozen brand new security features which make the new licence more difficult to tamper with, to counterfeit or to use for identity theft, this new licence will also be the platform that will allow us to deliver a passport alternative. Ontario is working with the federal government to obtain and add citizenship information to the licence, as well as working with both the federal and provincial privacy commissioners to ensure all privacy concerns are addressed.

The US Department of Homeland Security, of course, is part of this as well, to keep apprised of their specific requirements as they develop. Last month, Homeland Security announced that they will be accepting enhanced driver's licences, enhanced in security, as alternatives to passports at the Canada-US border once new identification requirements are put in place to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PHARMACISTS' DISPENSING FEES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: The minister has just received a copy of a document that I received from the caregiver of a resident at the Trilogy long-term-care home in Scarborough. That document shows that the Torrance Compounding Pharmacy of Scarborough not only filled the prescriptions of this resident, but obviously filled their own pockets on the way through the process.

The billing record that the minister has shows that for the period from October 29 to November 29 of this year, this pharmacy charged a total of 62 dispensing fees for this one patient alone. A number of those fees were charged for dispensing a single pill. In many cases the cost of the pill, according to the billing itself, was four cents; the dispensing fee was \$10.99.

I'd like to ask the minister this question: Is he aware of these billing practices?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm obviously particularly aware of the two-page list that the honourable member has sent me. I do appreciate the 35 seconds of notice. I haven't had a chance to fully examine that yet, but I would say to the honourable member that, through the work we did around Bill 102, one of those areas that we've certainly looked at and made some adjustment to is with respect to the prescribing practice for residents in long-term care.

There are schools of thought that suggest that moving towards a less frequent filling of prescriptions would be beneficial. There's another school of thought that suggests, because of the changeover that occurs in long-term care, that it is more advantageous to do it somewhat more regularly. But on the specific circumstances that are in hand, I'll be very happy to take a look at it and get back to the honourable member directly.

Mr. Frank Klees: A simple calculation tells us that the minister has a multi-million dollar problem. The fact is that this is a scam.

The question that I would have is, first of all, is he aware that this kind of billing practice is going on? In how many of our long-term-care homes across the province is this happening where one resident alone receives this kind of billing—four cents for the pill, \$10.99 for the prescription fee—69 times a month? Something is fundamentally wrong.

I'd like to ask the minister, will he order an investigation, not only of this particular bill but of that home and in fact of long-term-care homes across the province where this may well be taking place? At a time when our residents are only getting a \$7-a-day food allowance, he's allowing this kind of scam to go on across the province and stands in his place and justifies it.

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member is so intent on coming late to the party, he has failed to do any research or recognize that this was an issue addressed directly in the discussions around Bill 102. Your party stood in opposition to the alterations to get better benefit for the dollar from the public. That's why I'm very proud to say—and for the honourable member to hear this time—that, yes, that is an issue we're aware of. That's why changes are being made and why as—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Why didn't you—

Hon. George Smitherman: Oh, and now the former health minister herself, who was a critic of these changes. But I'm pleased to tell the honourable member and all others who are interested, that is why this month we are moving to once-a-month prescribing for residents, exactly to get at this matter—another example of how

we're getting a better benefit for the public's dollars spent in our long-term-care residences.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is for the Premier. Given your interest in the post-Kyoto negotiations going on in Bali, Indonesia, will you tell this House when you will be filing an Ontario climate change plan here, with targets, timelines, budget and policies? When will you file that here for debate and adoption?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, let me say that I'm very proud that our Minister of the Environment is attending the UN conference on climate change in Bali. I know that the Minister of the Environment for Quebec is also there. I know that Canadians as a whole have a tremendous interest in discussions that are taking place there.

I know that the honourable member also recognizes that we've already laid out a number of aspects of our climate change plan. The most recent announcement went out under the Go Green title. It included our targets for greenhouse gas emissions: 6% below 1990 levels by 2014, 15% below 1990 by 2020 and 80% by 2050. It also included \$150 million to assist homeowners in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving energy and adopting green technologies. We talked about our Move Ontario 2020 plan, which is the largest public transit investment of its kind, a multi-year, \$17.5-billion investment in Toronto and Hamilton.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, we saw this play out with the federal Liberals: lots of talk, lots of promise and, in the end, no action on climate change. Why will you not introduce an act for us to debate, and take action on climate change?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the honourable member has a keen and sincere interest in this issue. I think he understands as well that one of the most important things we need to begin to do here in Ontario, and ideally Canada—and even better than that, North America—is to attach a price to carbon. The only way we can do that, I believe, is to put in place an emissions trading scheme. I would love it if the federal government would put that in place for the country as a whole. In the absence of that kind of leadership, what we're doing is looking at the regional greenhouse gas initiative on the eastern coast with some US states there. We're also looking at the Western Climate Initiative, WCI, when it comes to California. We're looking at what we can do as a jurisdiction that wants to be progressive and aggressive when it comes to addressing greenhouse gas emissions and their reduction. But we cannot really attack this effectively until as a nation we decide that we're going to put a price on carbon and put in place an emissions trading scheme that is national in scope.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR NEWCOMERS

Mr. Jim Brownell: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario is one of the most

ethnically diverse places in the world. We are renowned around the globe as a place that welcomes newcomers and allows them to pursue opportunities to become integral contributors to the communities throughout Ontario. This government has shown real leadership in creating a Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration that actually helps newcomers settle and prosper in this province, enriching the whole province in the process. Minister, what support services are there to help newcomers to Ontario feel welcome, settle and integrate into our communities?

1510

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. Stats Canada has reported that more than half of newcomers to Canada settle right here in Ontario. The McGuinty government showed leadership in providing the ministry with resources to truly assist newcomers as they integrate into our society. This is why we passed the legislation that requires regulated professions in Ontario to have licensing processes that are fair, quick and open. This is why we have invested more than \$50 million since 2003 in over 90 bridge training programs. This is why we have invested more than \$50 million in adult non-credit language training each year. This is why we have fought for and signed the first-ever Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, and this is why I am encouraging the federal government to step up and deliver the funds of over \$100 million that they promised.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Such initiatives are certainly important here in the province. Newcomers bring a wealth of experience and skills that we can benefit from here in Ontario, and I am glad to see the government is continuing to facilitate new Ontarians in being at their best and being able to contribute to their new communities.

As more and more immigrants to Canada make Ontario their home, they often settle in large urban areas like Toronto. With well-established ethnic communities and greater resources, one can see the reason why. There is a great appeal, however, to living in small-town Ontario and rural Ontario that many newcomers often benefit from.

In my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, new Ontarians have settled in communities like Cornwall and Long Sault to enjoy the clean air, friendly atmosphere and great environment to raise a family. Newcomers could benefit a great deal from settling in such places in my riding, and Ontario's smaller communities will certainly benefit. What is your ministry doing to encourage newcomers to consider settling in smaller communities throughout Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: As we all know, the choice of where newcomers reside is a personal one. This is why our government established Ontarioimmigration.ca, a one-stop information gateway that helps both newcomers and potential immigrants to Ontario get the information they need about Ontario and its many municipalities. Newcomers can access practical information about

everything from how to get a health card to Ontario schools, labour markets and skills accreditation.

Ontarioimmigration.ca also provides the opportunity for municipalities to showcase and promote themselves to potential immigrants. Thirteen municipalities have signed on.

We welcome newcomers to settle anywhere in this beautiful province called Ontario because we know that when newcomers succeed, Ontario succeeds.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The town of Wasaga Beach has been advised by the Huronia West OPP detachment that their policing resources are being stretched to the limit. In fact, the detachment commander says he is barely able to provide adequate and effective policing in the area. As you know, this detachment also covers the townships of Clearview and Springwater on a non-contract basis. Under your government's watch, the detachment hasn't seen an increase of even a single police officer despite the fact that the population of this area has almost doubled and is set to soar in the years ahead. The OPP says it needs nine additional officers and one more civilian to provide adequate policing services in the area.

I have a simple question to the minister: When will you be hiring these new officers?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the member for the question. It is an important question. Public safety is one of our top priorities, and I only hope that the federal government shares our interest in public safety and that the member across the way will help us as we advocate with the federal government to get our fair share of the 2,500 officers it promised five years ago and hasn't delivered on.

We expect that Ontario will get its fair share of 1,000 to 1,250 officers and that they will be fully funded by the federal government. We in Ontario are fully funding 1,000 officers. It's a commitment we lived up to. We're asking the federal government to live up to its commitment so that your community can get their fair share of officers.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I believe it was Jean Chrétien of the federal Liberals who five years ago offered the 2,500 officers, but anyway, your answer is of little comfort to the people of Wasaga Beach. This detachment has 64 uniformed officers. It's had the same number of officers since 1994, in spite of the fact that the population has gone from 8,898 people living in Wasaga Beach to 16,000 people today.

According to Mayor Cal Patterson in a letter written to you on October 31, if the town wants adequate policing, then your government is going to send the town a bill for \$1.34 million, which would result in a whopping 13% tax increase for the residents of Wasaga Beach.

The question that the mayor and council are asking is, why is your government shortchanging the Huronia West

detachment by nine officers and one civilian, and why is the town now being told that it has to pay for the additional officers when it's clearly your government's responsibility?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, thanks very much for the question. Let's make it abundantly clear: We want the federal government to live up to the commitment that they made, and then we'll live up to our commitment that half of those officers will be OPP officers. You can stand and you can criticize what we who believe in public safety are doing, but the fact of the matter is that we're calling on the federal government to live up to the commitment that the Harper government made with regards to fully funding 2,500 officers across Canada.

We expect our fair share. We expect 1,000 to 1,250 officers, and we have committed that half of those officers will be OPP officers.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. For the umpteenth time, the Timmins and District Hospital is finding itself in a code red. There are no beds available in our hospital in order to accommodate new patients. Patients are forced to sleep on stretchers in the emergency for days on end because there are no beds available.

My question is simple: What do you plan on doing as a government to resolve this problem, and when can we expect it to happen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: The question the honourable member asks is a very good one. Indeed, Timmins has been experiencing some particular challenges, most certainly.

As the member knows, I was there in July. At that time, the local health integration network leadership was meeting with the folks in Timmins, which they've been doing. They should be in a position soon to make some announcements which will be a beginning. Subsequently, investment of the aging-at-home resources will be a further benefit.

But most certainly, to the people of Timmins and their local representative, I would want to assure them that we're aware it's difficult—we appreciate their patience in the circumstances—and that investments and help will be arriving in waves, and that most certainly building more long-term care must be among the solutions that are going to work for the people in Timmins. And we'll be on to that, too.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the minister, I acknowledge that, but you know as well as I do the big problem we have is that our long-term-care facilities are filled to capacity, the waiting lists are longer than we can deal with and the hospital is forced to take in ALCs to more than 50% of the capacity of the hospital.

I heard your answer, but my question is a very simple one: When can the people of the city of Timmins and area expect to get some resolution to this issue so that

we're not facing this again, as we have for the last four years?

Hon. George Smitherman: The reality of an aging population means this is going to be the kind of issue that we're grappling with really in most of our hospitals on an ongoing basis. It really is one of the bigger challenges. That's why our aging-at-home strategy invests \$700 million over the next three years.

I can tell the member that the people of Timmins should see the first sign of response very soon, but that over the period of the next months and years we would anticipate having to make a series of investments to catch up and address the circumstances there. Again, I acknowledge the challenges for the people working in the hospital and for the people in the community depending upon it. We'll be their ally in helping to make it better.

POVERTY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Poverty is a major concern for many residents who live in my riding of Scarborough Southwest and for all people in Ontario. In fact, many reports have indicated how dire the situation has become. I know that we have made improvements to help people in poverty over the past four years, but there is much more to do.

I am proud of what the McGuinty government has decided to do to make the battle against poverty a top priority. Can you please inform the House, Minister, what the government's plan is to eliminate this unfortunate condition in our society?

1520

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank my colleague from Scarborough Southwest for his question and also for being such a strong advocate for people living in poverty in his riding and across the province.

As you know, our government believes that helping all Ontarians is the right thing to do. That's why we need a coordinated and comprehensive strategy on poverty. Over the next year, we'll be listening and learning from people right across the province and beyond to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy and to determine the indicators that will be used to measure our progress. We will be asking not only what needs to be done, but how people outside of government can be part of the solution.

We already have a very strong foundation to build on. The new Ontario child benefit created by this government will provide 1.3 million Ontario children and 600,000 low-income families with real assistance with the cost of raising their children, whether they're on social assistance or working.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'd like to thank the minister for her response. I'm glad to hear there is a well-thought-out approach to this very serious concern. The most innocent victims of poverty happen to be children. This is extremely disconcerting because they are our province's future and they're suffering during their

formative years. Can you tell me what the government has done or what it plans to do to assist these most innocent victims in our society?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our government will not take a simplistic approach to this problem. We are determined to make investments where they will do the most good. We're looking to make sure every child can be the very best they can be—we need them to be. That is why we will build on the progress we've already made. In addition to the new Ontario child benefit and the increase to the minimum wage to \$10.25 over the next two and a half years, in three years we've created 22,000 licensed child care spaces to expand the availability of high-quality child care.

The Premier has just recently appointed an early learning adviser to report how to best implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. We're also committed to a \$45-million dental plan for low-income Ontarians. We're helping low-income working families with children access housing by creating 18,000 new affordable housing units and 35,000 housing allowances. We're committed to the reduction of child poverty—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

LICENCE PLATE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, I direct this question to you because you seem to have taken public charge of this file, based on your pronouncement of last week, and you've been all over the map on this one. First, it was, "‘Reverend’ is out," and then it's, "We're thinking about ‘Reverend.’" Then it's, "No, ‘Reverend’ is out again," and then last week you got up and said, "No, ‘Reverend’ is back in, but only if ‘Reverend’ was in prior to today" type of thing.

What I'm asking the Premier is, either the word "Reverend" is in or it's out. Now you're saying you're establishing this committee that is going to determine whether or not "Reverend" is okay on a licence plate into the future. Now, it's either in or it's out. The people who have "Reverend" on their plates are in. What about the ordained ministers in this province who want "Reverend" on their plates? Can we settle this issue and say yes to reverends at Christmastime in this House?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll refer this to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I again am absolutely delighted that the Premier has directed this question to me. It's very kind of him to do that.

As the member knows, some publicity has arisen this time around; I don't know why it didn't previously because he knows this has been going on ever since this program was established many years ago under the Conservative government.

What I have undertaken to do—because I see a problem arising, and I think he would agree with me—is that we're establishing an outside panel to review the criteria. I think there are some people who feel that the criteria are

not really applicable to 2007. It requires an update from time to time. There are instances where you and I might agree that something should be approved and something else shouldn't, so I hope with this new criteria that we will solve this problem in a way that's amicable to everybody in the province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The fact is, what you've done is made it worse. You've created a double standard. Two people in my riding—Reverend Andy McKee, he's OK. He got his "Reverend" plates three years ago. You're saying that's OK. Reverend Ingrid Condie-Bennett, who has applied for "Rev" on her plates too: You're saying she's going to have to wait and maybe she'll be turned down. What you're saying here is, "Folks, we're passing a new law, but those who've been in the habit of breaking the law in the past, you're OK. You'll be able to continue breaking it. But for people in the future—we're going to be on you like you know what." That is not right. It is either OK to have "Reverend" on your licence plate or it's not. I'm asking the minister to say to ordained ministers in this province, "‘Reverend’ on a licence plate in the province of Ontario is OK." Say it today, sir.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm glad that the member has raised an issue which is of great significance to the province of Ontario, and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to be able to respond to this. I recognize, as I think the member does, that this is a very difficult situation. You and I might agree on something in the House once in a while, and this might be one where we would agree. What we have done is said that where people are renewing, they should have the opportunity to renew the plate as it was. In the relatively near future, when we're able to have people outside of government take a look at the criteria, it may well be that a number of people who, before, might have been denied under the previous criteria that were established under your government and subsequently under other governments would have an opportunity to have a chance once again. So I'm pleased that the member has raised it. I'm sure he'll get another good headline in the Eganville Leader.

CHIROPRACTIC AND PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to direct my question to the Premier. Since taking office, I have been swamped with complaints about the delisting of chiropractic and physio services. Chiropractic and physio services have been proven to reduce long-term health care costs. Can the Premier explain why he delisted these services for OHIP coverage?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to welcome the honourable member. This is an issue which this Legislature and indeed the people of Ontario have had an opportunity to give their views around. For our part, the multibillion dollars' worth of investments that we've brought to the public medicare system in our province have ranged from the doubling of the number of com-

munity health centres—something that your seatmate could tell you a lot about—to the expansion of family health care in the Hamilton community, which has meant that alongside our doctors are dozens and dozens of new health care practitioners.

We'll continue to look for all appropriate opportunities to invest in good-quality health care in Ontario as we look forward: that is, an intense focus on the reduction of wait times in our emergency rooms and more family health care delivered to people right in their communities.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm not sure the minister answered the question. The most vulnerable people in my community are not getting the care they need. These people end up in hospital lineups. Providers of chiropractic and physiotherapy have long argued that people deprived of these vital health services will end up costing our health system more in the long run. Will the Premier or the minister commit to studying the impact of these health cuts and reconsider if the evidence shows they cost more?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate, as always, opportunities on offer from the third party for spending increases. I note that they also had a proposal to cut funding for health care in their platform from the election that just passed. For our part, we're very satisfied with the progress we're making to build a better-quality public health care system in Ontario, and we're gratified as well for the support that was on offer from the people of the province.

As I mentioned, we have many things to do to build the health care system, but our focus as a government will be building on the initiatives that we've undertaken so far: more progress on wait times, focusing on a reduction in wait times in our emergency rooms, and delivering more care to people right in their communities through family health care—nurses, doctors, nurse practitioners working together. These are our priorities.

1530

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, some 10 years ago, the Harris-Eves government subsidized tax cuts to the wealthy by downloading social costs onto our municipalities. For the more than 700,000 citizens of Mississauga, we saw social services costs loaded onto the property tax base that we have.

The federal Minister of Finance, who was actually a member of the government that did that downloading, recently said that his government was "not in the pothole business." Cities, who are in the pothole business, watched their ratepayers' money go to everything but what those taxes were raised for.

Minister, could you please remind the House of some of the measures that our government has taken in order to alleviate some of the pressure on municipal tax bases and address some of the downloading of the previous government?

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank the member from Mississauga. We have a great team of MPPs in Mississauga who are standing up for their community and standing up for the province of Ontario. Those of us who had the pleasure of serving in municipal government do remember those sad days when the previous government was downloading what they promised was going to be revenue neutral, and we all knew it was not revenue neutral when all of the bills came in. That's why I was so proud when Premier McGuinty, in August of this year in Ottawa at the AMO conference, stood up and announced that the provincial government will begin uploading Ontario drug benefit plan and ODSP costs beginning January 1, 2008, which will end up saving municipalities, over the span of four years, close to \$1 billion for their taxpayers. We're doing the right thing: We're helping cities, towns and villages across this province.

PETITIONS

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Physicians Needed in Small Ontario Communities.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Our community is facing an immediate, critical situation in accessing physician services.

"While the recruitment and retention of physicians has been a concern for many years, it is now reaching crisis proportions.

"Training more physicians in Ontario is certainly the best response to this problem in the longer term. We are, however, in urgent need of support for immediate short-term solutions that will allow our community both to retain our current physicians and recruit new family doctors and specialists in seriously understaffed areas. Foreign-trained physicians may help us to respond to this need.

"Therefore, we, as residents of Haliburton–Victoria–Brock, urge you to respond to our community's and our region's critical and immediate needs. For us, this is truly a matter of life and death."

Signed by many people in my riding. I attach my signature to it.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas more than 1.2 million Ontarians work at jobs that pay them less than \$10 an hour;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has failed to ensure a living wage for working families;

"Whereas people who work hard and play by the rules should be rewarded with the opportunity to earn a decent living and the chance to get ahead;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals were able to increase their own pay by 31%;

"Whereas an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour would help Ontario's working families earn a living wage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Ontario government to pass Bill 150, the NDP's living wage bill, which would immediately increase the Ontario minimum wage to \$10 an hour."

I am in agreement and would sign my name thereto, for what it's worth.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It's about the proposed ambulatory surgery centre to be located in western Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga-Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga-Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas day surgery procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative, intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin the planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I wholeheartedly support this petition. I'm going to affix my signature to it and ask page Olivia to carry it for me.

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, Alliston, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I agree with this petition. I have signed it, and send it to the table by way of page Quinton.

JOB TRAINING AND EI BENEFITS FUNDING

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled "Fairness for Ontario Workers":

"Whereas even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many; and

"Whereas last year, the average unemployed worker in Ontario received \$5,110 in regular EI benefits, while the average unemployed person in the rest of Canada received \$9,070; and

"Whereas, on average, the federal government provides an unemployed worker in Ontario with \$684 less for job training than it provides for an unemployed worker in another province; and

"Whereas fair funding could mean additional investments in important areas such as enhanced apprenticeship programs, labour market integration for new immigrants and skills training for older workers; and

"Whereas Ontario workers deserve the same opportunities as other Canadians to improve their skills, find

meaningful work, contribute to Canada's prosperity, and support their families;

"We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to be fair to Ontario workers by providing equal funding for employment insurance benefits and job training compared to other provinces."

I affix my name to this petition. I wholeheartedly support it and give it to page Nikita.

STEVENSON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital needs \$1.4 million in new funding over the next three years to get its birthing unit reopened and to ensure that they can recruit enough obstetricians and health care providers to supply a stable and ongoing service for expectant mothers in our area; and

"Whereas forcing expectant mothers to drive to Newmarket, Barrie or Orangeville to give birth is not only unacceptable, it is a potential safety hazard; and

"Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital cannot reopen the unit under its current budget and the McGuinty government has been unresponsive to repeated requests for new funding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government immediately provide the required \$1.4 million in new funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital so that the local birthing unit can reopen and so that mothers can give birth in Alliston."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: As I said the other day, I've got a bit of a backlog.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised to make the needs of students a priority for his government and that students deserve to have a bright future with a good education; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty has promised not to give up on students or Ontario's public school system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government work with the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board to establish an evening bus route from St. Joan of Arc High School in Barrie to the outlying communities. This would allow students to participate in extracurricular activities and help them to fulfill their potential, secure a bright future and receive the best educational experience possible, as promised to them by the Premier."

I've signed this petition and I certainly agree with it.

1540

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to read in a petition concerning health card renewal services close to Glanbrook residents. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signatures of Ruth Cowman and Jim Sackville, I affix my signature in support.

HIGHWAY 26

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 was approved by MPP Jim Wilson and the previous PC government in 2000; and

"Whereas a number of horrific fatalities and accidents have occurred on the old stretch of Highway 26; and

"Whereas the redevelopment of Highway 26 is critical to economic development and job creation in Simcoe-Grey;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government stop the delay of the Highway 26 redevelopment and act immediately to ensure that the project is finished on schedule, to improve safety for area residents and provide economic development opportunities and job creation in Simcoe-Grey."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just one more for today. I've got the wrong one here. This is a really old one, but people go to a lot of bother signing these things, so I think it's only right that we get them in and get a response from the government.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, without appropriate support, people who have an intellectual disability are often unable to participate effectively in community life and are deprived of the benefits of society enjoyed by other citizens; and

"Whereas quality supports are dependent on the ability to attract and retain qualified workers; and

"Whereas the salaries of workers who provide community-based supports and services are up to 25% less than salaries paid to those doing the same work in government-operated services and other sectors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario address, as a priority, funding to community agencies in the developmental services sector to address critical underfunding of staff salaries and ensure that people who have an intellectual disability continue to receive quality supports and services that they require in order to live meaningful lives within their community."

I would sign this and I certainly agree with it.

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to sign a petition and present it to the assembly about health card renewal services closer to Glanbrook residents. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

This is signed by a number of residents of Northern Breeze in Binbrook. With the signature of William and Patricia Russell, I affix mine in support.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas age-related macular degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness in the elderly and is present in some form in 25% to 33% of seniors over the age of 75. AMD has two forms: the more common 'dry'

type and the 'wet' type. Although the wet type occurs in only 15% of AMD patients, these patients account for 90% of the legal blindness that occurs with AMD. The wet type is further subdivided into classic and occult subtypes, based on the appearance of the AMD on special testing. Photodynamic therapy, a treatment where abnormal blood vessels are closed with a laser-activated chemical, has been shown to slow the progression of vision loss in both subtypes of wet AMD;

"Whereas OHIP has not extended coverage for photodynamic therapy to the occult subtype of wet AMD, despite there being substantial clinical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this treatment in patients with either form of wet AMD. Untreated, these patients can expect a progression in their visual loss, with central blindness as the end result;

"Whereas affected patients are in a position where a proven treatment is available to help preserve their vision, but this treatment can only be accessed at their own personal expense. Treatment costs are between \$12,500 and \$18,000 over an 18-month period. Many patients resign themselves to a continued worsening of their vision, as for them the treatment is financially unattainable. The resultant blindness in these patients manifests itself as costs to society in other forms, such as an increased need for home care, missed time from work for family members providing care, and an increased rate of injuries such as hip fractures that can be directly attributable to their poor vision.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to fund the treatment of the occult subtype of macular degeneration with photodynamic therapy for all patients awaiting this service."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

REPRÉSENTATION ÉLECTORALE FÉDÉRALE

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that despite the federal government's efforts to improve the representation of growing provinces in the House of Commons, the proposed formula is unfair to Ontario, and calls on the federal government to amend Bill C-22 to provide Ontarians with their fair share of seats in the House of Commons while maintaining the constitutionally protected seat guarantees of smaller provinces.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Premier McGuinty has moved government notice of motion no. 12. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I rise today to speak on a matter as fundamental as fairness, as precious as our

democratic principles and as basic as the belief that Canadians living in one province have as much value as Canadians living in another.

Je fais référence ici au projet de loi C-22, un projet de loi que le gouvernement fédéral a déposé en vue de changer le nombre de sièges à la Chambre des communes.

I'm referring to federal government Bill C-22. It's designed to change the number of seats in the House of Commons. In a nutshell, this bill is unfair to Canadians living here in Ontario because it undermines the principle of fair representation by population.

During the 2006 federal election campaign, the federal Conservatives pledged to restore representation by population for Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta in the House of Commons. They would do this quite rightly to ensure that Parliament catches up to and keeps pace with growing populations in those three provinces. But that's not what Bill C-22 does from an Ontario perspective. Instead, it ensures that Ontario will continue to be underrepresented. In fact, it would make the problem worse over time as our population continues to grow. That's because under Bill C-22, and following the 2011 census, Alberta and British Columbia stand to get approximately one new seat for every additional 100,000 people. Ontario, on the other hand, would receive roughly one new seat for every additional 200,000 people. That is a formula for unfairness. After all, we have to ask ourselves, are newcomers to Ontario only half as worthy of representation as newcomers to Alberta or BC? Yes, Ontario would gain additional seats under this proposal, but the gap between our share of seats and our share of the population would continue to grow. And as this House has pointed out in the past, when it comes to Canada's finances, a fairness gap should be eliminated, not extended, and certainly not exacerbated.

We Ontarians are proud Canadians.

1550

Joignant nos efforts à ceux des autres Canadiens et Canadiennes, nous avons bâti à la fois une province où nous sommes fiers de vivre et un pays auquel nous sommes fiers d'appartenir. Nous travaillerons toujours en collaboration avec les autres Canadiens et Canadiennes pour bâtir à la fois un Ontario plus fort et un Canada plus fort.

Working with our fellow Canadians, we built a province we are proud to call home and at the same time a country we are so proud to call our own. We will always work in partnership with our fellow Canadians to build a stronger Ontario and a stronger Canada at the same time. But we expect to be treated as full partners all the time, and that starts with fair representation in the people's house, the Parliament of Canada.

Ontarians accept that Canadians in smaller provinces or those with slower population growth may need protection for their existing number of seats in the federal Parliament. In fact, Ontarians have adopted this very Canadian approach in our own province by protecting the existing number of seats in northern Ontario. Just as we

accept the need, for example, of Canadians living in Prince Edward Island to retain their existing number of seats in the House of Commons, so too do we accept the need of the people of northern Ontario to retain their existing number of seats in this Legislature. We Ontarians have never argued that the principle of representation by population should apply perfectly, but it must apply fairly. There is no principles-based rationale for providing citizens in Ontario with less representation than citizens in Alberta or British Columbia. We are all three large, growing provinces.

Keep in mind that this is about more than just seats. Fair representation by population is the best way to ensure the views of all Canadians are represented. When our federal government debates things as crucial as how much to invest in medicare, whether or not to put our troops in harm's way and how best to tackle climate change, all Canadians need to be heard fairly. So to those who would suggest that this is somehow some arcane, academic debate best left to the political scientists, I say this matters to every Canadian because it's about every Canadian having a fair voice in the debates that affect each and every one of us.

I have written to Prime Minister Harper expressing my concerns in this matter. I've also written to all members of Parliament from Ontario. But I bring this matter up here in this Legislature because I strongly feel we need to speak as one on this issue. We did that when it came to Canada's fiscal arrangements, and, in fairness, the federal government has moved towards greater fairness insofar as those arrangements are concerned. There's more work to be done, to be sure, when it comes to achieving fairness, but there has been movement. We need to work together now to call on the federal government to introduce an amendment to Bill C-22. We must speak as one in demanding an amendment that would ensure fair representation by population for Canada's largest provinces, and we must speak as one in sending a clear signal that Canadians living here in Ontario are entitled to the same representation as those living in BC and Alberta.

Nous devons transmettre le même message afin que tout le monde sache que les membres de l'Assemblée sont d'avis qu'un Canadien est un Canadien et qu'il y a un seul genre de citoyen dans notre pays, soit un citoyen à part entier qui a le droit d'être traité équitablement.

We must speak as one so everyone knows that this House believes a Canadian is a Canadian is a Canadian and there is only one kind of citizen in our Canada, and that's a full citizen entitled to fairness.

So I say to my colleagues on all sides of this House, I believe we owe it to the people who elected us and we owe it to the country that continues to inspire us to stand for fairness, to speak as one, and to vote unanimously in favour of this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I want to indicate as well that my caucus will be voting in favour of this resolution because we truly do believe in representation by popu-

lation. We believe that every voter in Canada and every voter in Ontario should have an equally weighted vote when they vote for their MPP or their MP. We also recognize that in areas where members represent a very large geographical area, there has to be some flexibility in that rule, and we have flexibilities in our laws, particularly at the federal level, to allow plus or minus 25% in that representation.

I guess what bothers us most about this particular resolution and the position that the Premier has taken is that while he wants rep by pop for the province of Ontario against other provinces in our Confederation, he doesn't want rep by pop for all of Ontario—and we can achieve that fairly well. As you know, I've introduced an act in this Legislature which would guarantee 11 northern ridings, and I've called for a boundaries commission to deal with all of the other ridings in Ontario.

I don't think many people in Ontario understand that we have 107 MPPs, while there are only 106 MPs in this province. That is because this government, in 2005, brought forward a Boundaries Act, without the advice of an independent boundaries commission, and forced their opinion on this Legislature in spite of opposition in this Legislature.

Interjection.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: We gave the Premier the floor, and I think we deserve the floor as well. If the member for northern Ontario would listen, I want to guarantee 11 members in the north.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. We did give a good ear to the Premier, and I think every member of this Legislature should anticipate that they get the same courtesy.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I think what some members in the north want to do is create the illusion that we want to cut back the MPPs in the north. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our party has been consistent in our standing. What we want to do is guarantee the north 11 MPPs; we don't want to leave that up to future governments. In some ways, that's the same argument the Premier is going against in this particular assembly and in this resolution.

The other thing I would point out that the Premier said in his remarks a few moments ago, that the gap is growing—that is not correct with regard to Bill C-22, which the federal government is now debating. In fact, what happens with regard to their particular bill is, in amending the Representation Act at the federal level, it actually narrows the gap and gives Ontario more rep by pop than it had before.

This is an emotional issue at the federal level. This bill only affects three provinces out of the total of 10. All of the other provinces stay with the same representation as we go forward into the future. The only three provinces that are affected are Ontario, Alberta and BC. I note that if the federal government does not pass Bill C-22, Ontario, in 2011, would have 110 federal seats, whereas if Bill C-22 passes, we will have 116. I think we should

have more, and that's why we're voting for this resolution. But you can't have it one way at the federal level and another way at the provincial level. That is why we find this position of the Premier and the government a little bit hard to swallow.

Therefore, as I said, we support the motion of rep by pop and we believe that the federal government should move further towards that. We also believe that the provincial government should move towards that and has omitted that from their particular motion.

1600

So therefore, before I sit down, I move that this motion be amended by adding after "smaller provinces," "and that, in the opinion of this Legislature, the government of Ontario must demonstrate its belief in the principle of representation by population by addressing the inequity in representation at the provincial level by guaranteeing 11 MPPs in northern Ontario and creating an independent electoral boundaries commission to ensure Ontarians receive equal and effective representation in the provincial Legislature."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 12, which reads, "I move that this motion be amended by adding after 'smaller provinces' 'and that, in the opinion of this Legislature, the government of Ontario must demonstrate its belief in the principle of representation by population by addressing the inequity in representation at the provincial level by guaranteeing 11 MPPs in northern Ontario and creating an independent electoral boundaries commission to ensure Ontarians receive equal and effective representation in the provincial Legislature.'"

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to speak about this motion put forward by the Premier, and I guess by extension to talk about Bill C-22, which is before the federal House of Commons in Ottawa. The motion before this House, as I said, was made by the Premier. At first blush, I have to say, and in totality and in the end, I think New Democrats will support this motion.

At first blush, when I saw the motion last week, it looked to me entirely as an issue of fairness. It looked as if the Premier, and those who were arguing in favour of having some 20 seats as opposed to 10 new seats in Ontario, were looking at all the right triggers. They were looking, of course, that there should be representation by population.

We are in a very strange country where that is not always the case. It is plus or minus 25%, but even within the plus or minus 25%, there are huge disparities. Some of that is a result of our geography because the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, places in northern Ontario and the northern parts of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba are huge, enormous distances, where it is literally impossible for people to represent an area with 100,000 or 125,000 people because the areas are just enormous, and there aren't those numbers of people there. Of course, at first blush, I was looking that we deserve in Ontario to

have not 10, as is being proposed under Bill C-22, but 20 new members of Parliament.

At first blush, I also looked at the consultation, which I do not believe has been fairly put forward. I listened to what Mr. Van Loan had to say and, quite frankly, his comments in calling the Premier names, by calling him “the small man of Confederation,” were totally and completely inappropriate. I want to stand and say that I do not believe that the Premier of this province, in standing up for Ontario, was in any way diminished, was in any way “the small man of Confederation.” In fact, he was standing up for what is right for the people of this province. Even though I may be in opposition, I can tell you that there are times when one must stand up for the Premier, for his party, and for what he has to say. And this is one of those times.

I also want to say that I looked at the fair riding distribution and there was some merit in the comments that the previous debater had to say in terms of a fair riding distribution. Because if we are going to have a fair system of governance, whereby each representative represents a certain number of people, then it should be much fairer than the plus or minus 25% that we have, not only in the federal House, but that we have here in the province of Ontario as well.

I also have to ask, and I think this is a fair comment in view of someone who has said, at first blush, that this was an important motion before this Legislature: What precipitated the motion? Was it precipitated by what the Conservatives in Ottawa were planning to do or was it precipitated by something else? This is what I have difficulty with, because this issue has been before the federal House twice in the last 10 years. It was before the Chrétien government, which chose to do nothing in terms of Ontario, and it was before the Martin government, which in turn did nothing for Ontario and actually made the situation worse.

I did not hear anything from this House during those periods of time. I was not here during the Chrétien years, but I was here during the Martin years, and I do not remember anything being said either by the Conservatives or the Liberals at that time, or by the Premier at that time, on the inherent unfairness of the last assessment and the number of seats Ontario received. I wonder where the Premier was then. I wonder where this Legislature was then because, if anything, although this bill is unfair, it is fairer to Ontario, with respect, than what Paul Martin did to this province four or five years ago. It is fairer in terms of the seat distribution by actually giving us 10—not the 20 we deserve, but giving us 10—whereas under the Martin government that was not the case.

So I have to question why the Premier is embarking on this today. I would like to think it is for what is fair and just, but there are those who would opine it is yet but another smokescreen. It is to throw the people off in terms of the real issues here in Ontario, which I might suggest are jobs, the state of the economy and what is going to happen with poverty.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: I hear some rumblings in the backbench, even though I'm supporting you. If it's funny, I'll listen.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Nice tie.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know you love my ties.

I need to state for the record just a couple of things. First of all, the Conservative position is one that cannot be countenanced. It is, in my considered view, one of petty politics. It is one of their mismanaging this file. It is one of them looking at how they can curry favour in places where they are more likely to win votes, i.e., in Alberta or British Columbia, than they are here in the province of Ontario.

I believe that the Prime Minister has mismanaged the issue, and I believe that the Premiers not only of Ontario but of Quebec and Manitoba have spoken quite eloquently that this is not the right thing to do. Just to quote them as well, because I think we have some friends out there, friends in both Premier Charest and Premier Doer—just a couple of quotes that both of them have said in the last few weeks. Premier Charest has recently stated, “I understand the perspective of Premier McGuinty. We will work with Ontario.” Premier Doer of Manitoba stated, “I think we should take our time and get [the legislation] right in terms of the principles for this country. Otherwise, it could be perceived as a cynical exercise.”

We need to make sure that this is fair. We need to build consensus. We need to make sure that the people of Ontario are fairly treated, and we need a bill that is fair to all parts of the country. Most importantly, whatever is passed in Ottawa will have huge effects not only on this province but on this very Legislature because, as all members here know, whatever seats are awarded in Ottawa will, with the exception of an extra northern seat, be mirrored exactly in this House. So if we end up with 116 seats in the province, as this bill purports to do, there will be 116 members in this House. If we end up with 127 members, as the Premier is asking, there will be 127 or perhaps 128 members in this House. Therefore, what is being debated here today will have a profound effect on how well this Legislature works in the future.

It has been said by a number of experts that this House has failed to operate in the same capacity as it once did. It fails to act not so much inside of the four walls of this room, it fails to act in terms of our committees, because our committees are understaffed. There are not enough members to attend the committees for the committees to do the proper work in the House.

1610

It was suggested by many of the experts who came before the Legislature, looking at how this House can operate better, that we would operate much better were we to have around 130 to 135 members. I remember laughing—because one of the times that this was said was during the previous government's reign when the Conservatives were there—and the question asked by me: “Do you mean to say that if the House had not voted for the Fewer Politicians Act and we continued to have

about 130 to 135 members, this House would have operated much better?" The answer from the experts was yes, that that is the only way our committees can properly function.

So why I am asking the members to vote for this—and perhaps it is selfish as well—is that I believe that the 21 members who are going to come forward, should this pass, would be a huge boon and benefit to this House, to this Legislature, and to the committees that operate.

But I have to ask the Premier, and perhaps the other members of the House, one final thing in my speech and my submissions here. The question is—and we all know that it may be very difficult to convince Prime Minister Harper; it may be very difficult to convince his minister Mr. Van Loan—is the Premier willing to look at the proposal that the Fewer Politicians Act has failed this Legislature, that we are the only province in Canada that ties our provincial members to our federal ones? If that has failed the province of Ontario and in fact we should be having more politicians in the province of Ontario, and if that number should be 127 or 128, are we willing to look at unilaterally making that happen to us? We have the authority; we're the only province that does not exercise it. We have the authority to say that this Legislature needs 128 people. If the federal government is not willing to do so, I would suggest we should unilaterally show them how it's done and that the Premier and the members of cabinet take a very hard, solid look at whether or not we are going to act in that direction.

Last but not least, I'm asking that the Legislature pass the Premier's motion, and I'm asking that we all, in unison, vote for the motion that we tell the federal government we need more representation in this province in the House of Commons. At the same time, I'm asking the Premier to look very carefully. If this does not succeed, if we do not move that mountain—in the old adage, if the mountain will not go to Muhammad, perhaps Muhammad should go to the mountain—if we cannot change the federal government to do that, then we should be willing ourselves to change, it so that in reality this Legislature works best for the province and for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. McGuinty has moved that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario recognizes that despite the federal government's efforts to improve the representation of growing provinces in the House of Commons, the proposed formula is unfair to Ontario and calls on the federal government to amend Bill C-22 to provide Ontarians with their fair share of seats in the House of Commons while maintaining the constitutionally protected seat guarantees of smaller provinces.

Mr. Sterling has moved that the motion be amended by adding after "smaller provinces," "and that, in the opinion of this Legislature, the government of Ontario must demonstrate its belief in the principle of representation by population by addressing the inequity in representation at the provincial level by guaranteeing 11 MPPs in northern Ontario and creating an independent electoral boundaries commission to ensure Ontarians receive equal and effective representation in their provincial Legislature."

The first question to be decided is Mr. Sterling's amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We shall now deal with the motion before the floor, government motion number 12.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until Tuesday, December 11, at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1615.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Culture / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Culture
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / procureur general
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Health) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Santé)
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craiton, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Energy / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Énergie
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice-Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Research and Innovation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health Promotion / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée)
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires autochtones
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for seniors / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (L)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (L)	Huron–Bruce	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Municipal Affairs) / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Affaires municipales)
Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziatti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Hon. / L'hon. Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (L)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Minister of Energy / ministre de l'Énergie
Prue, Michael (ND)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (L)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (L)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (L)	London–Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (L)	Northumberland–Quinte West	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (Rural Affairs) / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales (Affaires rurales)
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House leader / leader parlementaire de l'opposition
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (L)	Guelph	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / York-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement (Logement)

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (L)	Nipissing	Minister of Revenue / ministre du Revenu
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (L)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / vice- premier ministre, ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (L)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Zimmer, David (L)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général

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Phil McNeely, Lou Rinaldi, Garfield Dunlop
Tim Hudak, John O'Toole, Gilles Bisson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
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Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
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Randy Hillier, Lisa MacLeod, Julia Munro,
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Justice Policy / Justice

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Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
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**Regulations and private bills /
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Miller, Bill Murdoch, Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht,
Mario Sergio
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Social Policy / Politique sociale

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Laurel C. Broten, Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo,
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Khalil Ramal, Laurie Scott, Peter Shurman
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 11 December 2007

Mardi 11 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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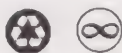
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 11 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 11 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2007 annual report of the Auditor General of Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: On September 7, the Minister of Health made an announcement promising to allocate health care dollars according to population size. The GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance has been educating all members of the Legislature about this unfairness for more than four years. Despite the Premier's commitment three days before the provincial election, there was no mention of solving the funding inequity for high-growth communities in last week's throne speech.

Currently, Ontario's hospitals are not funded on the basis of the population of the community they serve. As a result, there are significant and growing gaps in per capita funding for hospital services in high-growth regions, including my own riding of Dufferin-Caledon. In my community, the per capita funding for hospital care in the Central West LHIN, which includes Headwaters Health Care Centre, is \$280 lower than the provincial average. This means that Headwaters is expected to provide the same level of health care with fewer resources. As a result, residents wait longer for hospital care or have to seek care outside our community, away from the support of family and friends. This is unfair and unacceptable.

Residents living in high-growth communities deserve the same quality and access to health care as the rest of the province. The promise was made; the time for action is now. The government must provide high-growth communities with the funding they need.

MAYOR OF SUDBURY LE MAIRE DE SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today in Sudbury there will be a big celebration at the Steelworkers Hall in honour of John Rodriguez's first anniversary as mayor of the city of

Greater Sudbury. Mayor Rodriguez has demonstrated that with the right leadership, a lot can happen in a year.

Il a débuté avec la décision de hisser le drapeau franco-ontarien à l'hôtel de ville.

Along with city council, he then proceeded with a progressive strategy: City council adopted a fair wage policy for municipal construction contracts; former NDP Finance Minister Floyd Laughren's report on the needs of outlying communities started to be implemented; progress was made on plans to eliminate long-distance telephone charges within the city and to purchase local Hydro One assets; council adopted the Housing First strategy, which is making a huge difference in the lives of homeless people in Sudbury and Nickel Belt; council passed a motion requesting this government to increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour now; and, most recently, councillors passed a motion in support of not-for-profit daycare, recognizing that our children should not be exploited for money by big box child care companies.

Although I will not be there tonight to celebrate with you, Mayor Rodriguez, enjoy your celebration. Vous avez eu une bonne première année. Amusez-vous; vous le méritez bien. Encore une fois, je m'excuse de ne pas pouvoir être là avec vous.

GREAT WOLF LODGE

Mr. Kim Craitor: Each year, the Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce holds an event to celebrate businesses that have proven outstanding business achievement, community partnership, community leadership and economic impact in our community. This year, they recognized the great impact the Great Wolf Lodge has had on Niagara Falls.

During the construction of Great Wolf Lodge, 300 to 350 construction workers were on the job; most were local. The total cost of construction from start to finish was \$130 million. Great Wolf Lodge has poured so much concrete that it would equal 32 miles of highway. The steel used in construction would equal 120 miles if it was laid down end to end. Great Wolf Lodge cleans and purifies more water in one day than the city of Niagara Falls. The lodge had 507 employees when it opened in 2006, and now has 614 employees, which speaks well to the health of our tourist economy. Last year, Great Wolf Lodge paid \$2.3 million in taxes to the city of Niagara Falls.

I would ask this assembly to join with me in congratulating the management and staff at Great Wolf Lodge for their recognition by the Niagara Falls Chamber

of Commerce for their outstanding business achievement and continuing contributions, not only to my riding of Niagara Falls but to the province of Ontario.

Finally, I'm pleased to see that we have in the members' gallery today the regional chair, Peter Partington. Welcome, Peter.

TOBACCO GROWERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yesterday, 400 tobacco farmers, landowners and Six Nations residents gathered outside the Onondaga Longhouse at Six Nations. Over 100 bales of tobacco were transferred from farm pickup trucks into a tractor-trailer at Six Nations. This represented close to \$1 million in tobacco tax revenue that neither this provincial government nor the federal government will ever see again.

Whether one approves of civil disobedience or not, in this case, the desperate times for farmers triggered a desperate measure. This is a threat to government. Government, for some time now, has had no control over 25% of the tobacco trade, losing millions a year nationally in taxes to the underground economy. This underground economy has been created by government tax policy.

Tobacco farmers have had enough. They want out. They are in a market meltdown. Government policy has propped up an illegal tobacco trade with which the legal trade cannot compete. Yesterday was a signal that some farmers have decided that if they can't beat them, they may join them.

An exit package is needed immediately, yet government works at a glacial pace, waiting for the feds to make a move. All the while, these are Ontario tobacco growers.

Those attending the gathering at the Onondaga Longhouse asked for some meaningful dialogue, and they asked for some action.

ANAM AHMED

Mr. Dave Levac: I wish to recognize Ms. Anam Ahmed, of Brantford, who is one of only three recipients of the Lincoln M. Alexander Award. This award, established in 1993, pays tribute to young people in Ontario between the ages of 16 and 25 who have demonstrated outstanding leadership in eliminating racism and discrimination.

This outstanding contribution was recognized at an awards ceremony yesterday in the Lieutenant Governor's suite. The Lincoln M. Alexander Award was presented by the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable David Onley. A scroll and a cheque for \$5,000, were presented by the former Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander.

Miss Anam Ahmed, only 17 years old, a high school student from North Park Collegiate in the riding of Brant, in Brantford, was recognized for her creative approaches to the discussion of racism. Some of her accomplishments include writing, choreographing and performing a play called "911/Tango" at her school; producing a video

named "Connected," which was judged one of the top 10 in the nation in a contest called "Racism: Stop It"; and she piloted and chaired the anti-racism committee at her school and also contributed to creating a DVD on racism in schools.

Each one of us has a contribution to make in ending prejudice and racism. These young people—there are two others—must be congratulated by us, and we ask them to continue to share their wisdom.

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I rise today to gently remind the government of its promise, first in the 2003 election and again in the 2007 election, to amend the educational funding formula—so far unkept, especially as it pertains to students in rapidly growing areas.

In my riding of Halton, which consists of the town of Milton—the fastest growing town in all of Canada—and rapidly growing parts of Oakville and Burlington, problems with the funding formula are causing ongoing turmoil for children.

In Burlington, at Alexander's Public School, portable classrooms litter the schoolyard. Parents are concerned that their children will spend most of their education switching from one school to another as new schools are built and boundaries are shifted.

That situation has already occurred in Oakville, where students at Joan of Arc Catholic school have been shunted around four times in the last few years. Now, to solve a funding formula problem, graduating students of Joan of Arc are being told to attend old St. Thomas Aquinas high school in order to bump up its student population to qualify for funds to rebuild it. These same students at Joan of Arc Catholic school live within walking distance of St. Ignatius of Loyola high school.

These same problems with the funding formula are about to impact students in Milton at Bruce Trail Public School, where high growth and portables rule the day.

This is my gentle reminder to the government of its so far unkept promise. The next time I promise I will not be so gentle. And I, for one, keep my promises.

BAXTER CANADA

Mr. Charles Sousa: It is my great pleasure to congratulate Baxter Canada, a great corporate citizen in Mississauga, Ontario, and Canada, on the occasion of their 70th anniversary celebration this week.

Baxter Canada is located in my neighbouring riding of Mississauga East—Cooksville, held by my distinguished colleague the Honourable Peter Fonseca. Their presence and contribution in Mississauga and across this great country have been tremendous. Over the past 70 years, Baxter Canada has been focused on bringing innovative solutions to improve the lives of patients, particularly individuals requiring kidney dialysis, individuals afflicted with hemophilia, and the thousands of individuals

who each day are treated and recovering in hospitals and at home.

Baxter Canada has not only demonstrated leadership and innovation in health care, but they are also leaders in sustainable manufacturing and environmental stewardship right here in Ontario. Their commitment to improving health, their contribution to a knowledge-based innovation economy balanced with being environmentally responsible, and their commitment to being a great corporate and community citizen are exceptional.

On behalf of my colleagues who represent the great city and ridings within Mississauga, I would like to thank Baxter Canada for their ongoing leadership and wish them continued success over the next 70 years and beyond.

POD GENERATING GROUP

Mr. David Oraziotti: This past Friday in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, I had the opportunity of being joined by Sandra Pupatello, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, to announce that the largest solar farm in Canada is coming to our community.

Thanks to our government's innovative standard offer program, California's Pod Generating Group has chosen the province of Ontario to make a \$360-million investment. When fully phased in, the project will supply Ontario's energy grid with 60 megawatts of clean, green energy—enough electricity to supply 9,000 homes.

Here's what David Livingston, the CEO of Pod Generating Group, had to say: "As a team, we continue to be impressed by Ontario's commitment to develop clean, renewable power generation. The solar power facilities that we are putting into operation in Sault Ste. Marie are showing what a dedicated group of individuals can do to meet the environmental challenges facing Canada and the world."

Our renewables strategy is working. The new solar farm is one of a series of significant energy projects that are resulting in sizable economic investments in the Soo and area. The Algoma Steel cogeneration facility, a 63-megawatt high-efficiency cogeneration project, is a \$135-million investment and is currently under construction. Nearby, in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, the Brookfield Power wind farm, Canada's largest wind installation, is a \$400-million investment.

Across the province, OPA reports that 228 renewable energy projects have been awarded since November 30, 2007. The McGuinty government is leading the way in North America when it comes to renewable energy development to fight against climate change.

SCIENCE COMPLEX AT UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Last week, I was proud to attend the official opening of the new, state-of-the-art science complex at the University of Guelph. This impressive complex allows faculty from a variety of scientific

disciplines to work collaboratively in their pursuit of innovation. The multidisciplinary science complex will encourage students to draw connections across traditional boundaries and seek an intellectual appreciation for the sciences and technology as powerful means for understanding and shaping the world.

Through the Ontario Research Fund and the Ontario Innovation Trust, our government is providing \$11.3 million to the University of Guelph in support of two leading-edge research projects that are sited at the science complex: first, \$7.3 million for a facility for cell membrane and surfaces research, supporting the research activities of over 20 researchers from five departments. The research is advancing our understanding of human diseases and will help to develop effective strategies for therapeutic intervention. The university also received \$4 million in support of an applied evolution centre that is allowing researchers to explore ways to predict and manage the genetic impacts of humans on other organisms.

Congratulations, Guelph. By working together, we will keep Ontario at the forefront of the global economy.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery three members from the Parliament of Lithuania: Kestutis Glaveckas, Vytautas Saulis and Manfredas Zymantas. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

I'd also like to draw the attention of the members to the Speaker's gallery to welcome Mr. Jim McCarter, Ontario's Auditor General, along with a number of his staff. Mr. McCarter and staff, welcome.

VISITORS

Hon. Jim Watson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm delighted to welcome into the members' gallery members of MARCO, the Mayors and Regional Chairs of Ontario. Earlier today, I had the pleasure of meeting with Peter Partington, regional chair from Niagara; Fred Eisenberger, mayor of Hamilton; Tom Gosnell, deputy mayor of London; Roger Anderson, chair of Durham; Bill Fisch, chair of York region; and the chair of MARCO and the chair of Waterloo region, Ken Seiling. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce visitors in the members' gallery: Donna Dillman, in the 66th day of her hunger strike against uranium mining in Frontenac county, joined by hunger strikers Rita Bijons, Adrianna Mugnatta-Hamu and Sharon Howarth. Welcome to the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Dave Levac: In consultation with the whips of all parties, I seek unanimous consent to wear the pins of the Ontario Conservation Officers Association members in recognition—and a reminder that in room 228 at 6 p.m., the holiday reception of these fine people will be taking place. The pins are a reminder of their good work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent for all members to wear the pins. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

Mr. Howard Hampton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: We have with us in the gallery today a very special person, Tara Mansouri-Moayed. Tara is a legislative learner with the co-op program of the University of Waterloo. She has been a tremendous asset to my office for the past four months. In fact, I want to read a resolution she has drafted for me:

“In the opinion of this House, as a noble tribute to those who served in the great wars, that the government of Ontario give consideration to providing financial support for urgently needed repairs to the rose window in the Church of the Epiphany in Woodstock, which has stood as a tribute to our fallen heroes for the past 75 years.”

I want to thank Tara for her excellent work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, and welcome.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW
(SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY)
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT
LA LOI CHRISTOPHER
SUR LE REGISTRE
DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr. Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, An Act to amend Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 2000 / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi Christopher de 2000 sur le registre des délinquants sexuels.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'll defer to ministerial statements.

PENSION BENEFITS
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act / Projet de loi 17, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill is critical to the workers of this province. The PBG fund is grossly underfunded, and if we were to have a major problem with closures in this province, this would cause immense problems for that fund. We need to increase that fund to protect the people if our economy takes another slide and businesses run into trouble.

MOTIONS

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Hon. Michael Bryant: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion concerning a panel of members to consider ways to make the assembly more family friendly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is there unanimous consent to deal with the motion, as proposed, regarding a committee to make the assembly more family friendly? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Before I move this motion, allow me to credit the member for Nepean—Carleton for her initiative and her perseverance.

Applause.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Hear, hear.

Thanks to the House leaders for the official opposition and the third party and to the government caucus as well.

I move that the House leaders of the recognized parties shall agree to terms, and an all-party panel composed of no more than two members from each recognized party shall be appointed to make recommendations to the Speaker on ways to make working at the Ontario Legislature more family friendly for members of provincial Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move motions regarding the committees of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the membership of the standing committee on regulations and private bills be revised as follows: Mr. Naqvi is removed.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the standing committee on social policy be authorized to meet for the purpose of organization on the morning of Thursday, December 13.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the following schedule for committee meetings be established for the 39th Parliament:

The standing committee on justice policy may meet on Wednesday and Thursday mornings; the standing committee on social policy may meet on Monday and Tuesday afternoons following routine business; the standing committee on general government may meet on Monday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on finance and economic affairs may meet on Thursday mornings and Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on estimates may meet on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on government agencies may meet on Wednesday mornings; the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly may meet on Thursday afternoons following routine proceedings; the standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursday mornings; the standing committee on regulations and private bills may meet on Wednesday mornings.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion regarding a ballot order for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), Mr. Crozier, Mr. Lalonde, Mr. Rinaldi and Mr. Kwinter exchange places in the order of

precedence for private members' public business such that Mr. Crozier assumes ballot item 4, Mr. Lalonde assumes ballot item 19, Mr. Rinaldi assumes ballot item 26 and Mr. Kwinter assumes ballot item 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader?

L'hon. Michael Bryant: C'est tout.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think that's all.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the Minister of Transportation very much for his translation.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise today to introduce legislation to strengthen Christopher's Law. If passed, the proposed amendments would allow police to track more sex offenders and keep our province and our people safe.

Almost 20 years ago, 11-year-old Christopher Stephenson was brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile on federal statutory release. Christopher's family, victims' groups and law enforcement agencies worked tirelessly to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again. They sought mandatory registration for convicted sex offenders. Ontario responded with Christopher's Law, the first sex offender registry in Canada, and it was a step that spurred nationwide co-operation.

Today, police across Ontario consult the sex offender registry about 400 times each day. It helps them monitor and locate sex offenders in their communities. It's a proven investigative tool and, most important, it's helping to protect vulnerable children and adults from predators. But there's still more we can do.

This afternoon, the report of the Auditor General on the Ontario sex offender registry was tabled. Our government welcomes this report and the valuable recommendations it contains.

Our proposed legislation responds to the recommendations made by the Auditor General. This legislation would require more offenders to register and provide more tools for police to track offenders. If passed, Christopher's Law would be amended to include the following:

Sex offenders serving an intermittent sentence, for example on weekends, would be required to register within 15 days of sentencing;

Persons released on bail pending appeal for a sex offence would be required to register;

If a person found not criminally responsible on a detention disposition were released unsupervised from a mental health facility, the registry would be notified;

The registry would also be notified if a sex offender were released from a correctional facility on an unescorted temporary absence pass.

As federal day parolees fall under federal jurisdiction, the province will work closely with the federal government to ensure the necessary coordination occurs.

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We are also making operational improvements. In his report, the Auditor General salutes the hard work being carried out by those who maintain the sex offender registry. I would echo this, and thank police services across Ontario, as well as the OPP members in Orillia who are responsible for operating and maintaining the registry, and who are so committed to the safety and security of the people of this province.

Today, Ontario's sex offender registry has a 95% compliance rate. This represents one of the highest compliance rates of all sex offender registries in operation, including the registries in the United States. Our government is committed to reaching 100%. If passed, this legislation would help us reach that goal. It would help police track more offenders quickly and efficiently, and it would help ensure safer streets and communities for all Ontarians.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

FINANCES MUNICIPALES

Hon. Jim Watson: I rise today to update members on the progress being made by the McGuinty government to support Ontario's municipalities and to work with them in strengthening our communities. Positive and productive relations with the municipal sector are a priority of this government. Just this morning, I had the real pleasure of meeting with the mayors and regional chairs of Ontario, who I had the opportunity to introduce just a moment ago. A month ago, I met with the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, and before that, I met with municipal representatives in southwestern Ontario.

Et pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, j'ai rencontré le conseil d'administration de l'Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario avec ma collègue, M^{me} Meilleur.

My message to all of them has been the same: The McGuinty government is committed to working with you. At last summer's annual conference of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, held in my hometown of Ottawa, we renewed the memorandum of understanding with AMO. This agreement is the foundation of provincial-municipal relations. It commits the province to prior consultation with municipalities whenever it proposes changes to the provincial legislation and regulations that will have a significant financial impact on the current municipal budget year or planning cycle. I'm pleased to say that our government is also in the process of negotiating a similar agreement with the city of Toronto.

Another example of our strong working relationship with AMO and the city of Toronto is the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal Service and Delivery Review. In this review, both provincial and municipal governments are working to develop affordable and sustainable ways to fund and deliver services for Ontario's communities. While I'm looking forward to the review's consensus-based report next spring, the work of the review has already paid dividends in Ontario's municipalities.

Dans le cadre de l'examen, les administrations municipales et le gouvernement provincial cherchent à trouver des moyens abordables et viables de financer et de prodiguer des services aux collectivités de l'Ontario.

Bien que la parution du rapport consensuel de l'examen soit prévue pour le printemps prochain, l'initiative a déjà profité aux municipalités de l'Ontario.

Beginning next month, the province will upload the cost of the Ontario drug benefit program, and starting in 2009 will upload the cost of the Ontario disability support program. This upload was identified as a top priority by the municipal representatives in the review. The benefits of this upload will be substantial. In 2008, the estimated cost savings to municipalities is \$173 million. By the time the upload is fully implemented in 2011, it will save municipalities, and thus municipal property taxpayers, \$935 million annually.

These savings are on top of the additional funding we will continue to provide to municipalities. Under the Ontario municipal partnership fund, \$843 million will be allocated to municipalities in 2007. That's \$225 million more than transfers in 2004 under its predecessor program. For 2008, I can assure municipalities that, province-wide, the overall dollars for the partnership fund will not be reduced, even though we are uploading Ontario drug benefit program cost.

In 2008, we plan to increase our investment in municipalities for land ambulance services again. This planned increase will fulfill the Premier's commitment in 2006 to invest approximately \$300 million to assist municipalities with land ambulance costs, moving to a 50-50 funding arrangement.

Nous sommes chanceux de vivre dans la meilleure province du pays le plus fortuné du monde. En travaillant ensemble au renforcement de nos petites et grandes villes, nous veillerons à ce que les générations futures d'Ontariens et d'Ontariennes puissent en dire autant.

These are just some of the investments our government is making in our cities and towns, and just some examples of the province and municipalities working in partnership. We are fortunate to live in the best province and the most blessed country in the world, and by working together to strengthen our cities and towns, we can help ensure that future generations of Ontarians will be able to make the same claim.

VENTURE CAPITAL FUND

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating you on your election to the chair.

I rise today to bring to the attention of all of us in the House the efforts the McGuinty government is making to ensure emerging innovative companies can grow and succeed in this province. These companies represent the future of Ontario. They are the embodiment of our best ideas, the solutions to our most pressing of challenges, and the source of our next generation of jobs and economic growth.

In Ontario, we have world-class researchers. We have world-class, globally competitive industry. What we strive for is a world-class, vibrant capital market to support the young start-up companies that will drive our future economy.

A financial report released last week highlighted the importance of venture capital and, for example, the challenges of attracting large pools of foreign investment capital to Canadian companies. The McGuinty government is well aware of the challenges facing small, innovative firms that need access to capital to take their business to the next level. That's why we committed \$90 million in our 2006 budget to create a venture capital fund to spur investment in new emerging Ontario-based businesses. The McGuinty government understands the need to ensure that large pools of institutional capital, whether they be at banks, pension companies or insurance companies, are available to our young start-up companies. That's why we created the Ontario venture capital fund.

Today I'm happy to report on the progress of that fund. Last month, at the Toronto Stock Exchange, the Premier and I announced that Ontario will partner with the Ontario municipal employees retirement system—OMERS—capital partners, the Royal Bank of Canada capital partners, the Business Development Bank of Canada, and Manulife Financial to create a market-driven fund of funds. Let me emphasize that this is a market-driven solution, and that's why it's so innovative. It is not politicians nor bureaucrats that will be making market decisions. Together with our partners, we are actively pursuing a world-class, top-performing venture capital fund manager to manage the fund of funds.

We cannot expect the rest of the world to invest in our globally significant innovation if we ourselves are not willing to step up to the plate. If we don't do this, our companies will relocate to other jurisdictions to find the capital and support they need, places like Boston and San Antonio and San Francisco. It is those other jurisdictions that will ultimately benefit from the resulting jobs.

I am so very pleased that successful large corporate institutional and federal investors are eager to work with us to invest in Ontario. In total, the McGuinty government and its private sector partners are initially investing \$165 million in the fund. And we're not stopping there. I'm actively encouraging other large institutional and corporate pools of capital to join us in a second round of investment to grow Ontario's VC fund. Together, we will build the next generation of venture capital support in

Ontario. As we grow this fund, Ontario will become even more effective at competing globally for talent, ideas and investment, and even more successful at nurturing Ontario's own emerging companies from the back of a napkin to the front of the business pages.

1410

In Ontario, we have world-class researchers, savvy entrepreneurs and a well-educated, highly skilled workforce, and the McGuinty government is committed to harnessing this potential through innovative programs like Ontario's VC fund. But Ontario also needs our partners in the federal government to continue to improve the business climate for venture capital in Canada. Ontario can't do it alone. We must work together to build a climate that supports innovative companies, because growing businesses that are on the cutting edge of the new economy means more high-value jobs and economic prosperity for this province.

Ultimately, that's what we're trying to accomplish in everything we do at my ministry. It's about fostering the jobs of the future for our children and our grandchildren, jobs that have not even been invented yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I want to respond to the Minister of Community Safety's announcement about amendments to Christopher's Law. As the member who originally introduced the legislation, there's no question that the contents of the Auditor General's report today are very serious, very disappointing and, from the perspective of our party, the official opposition—and I'm sure it's shared by every member—deeply disturbing. When you receive news that hundreds of sex offenders have been roaming the streets in neighbourhoods of the province of Ontario unaccounted for, that has to be, I think, frightening.

This is a public safety system that, until now, Ontarians believed was uniquely working to provide enhanced protection for all citizens of the province, especially our children. And now to find out that it is so flawed, that in fact, given the flaws and the weaknesses that the Auditor General has pointed to, the OPP was at the same time diverting funds over a period of time for other uses, I think just deepens the concern with respect to the utilization of what we all hoped would be a very effective tool to combat sex crimes, primarily crimes against children.

Some of the stats here: 365 provincial sex offenders who should have been registered were not; 360 federal sex offenders who should have been registered were not; 364 non-compliant offenders—almost 70% in breach of the act in excess of two years. I think there's no question that we need to know what went wrong. The minister's amendments, I'm sure, will address some of the legislative shortcomings, and we will certainly work with the government to address those in a timely fashion. But there are things that can and should be done now, given

the legislation in place, that he didn't speak to—I didn't hear him if he did speak to them—and I think it's incumbent upon him to address those as quickly as possible in terms of how we can address those shortcomings immediately to ensure, as much as possible, public safety in the province of Ontario.

There are serious questions here. I believe—and I'm not one who frivolously calls for public inquiries. The now government, the Liberal Party of Ontario, when they were sitting on this side of the House, it was almost a weekly occurrence when they called for a provincial inquiry. So I would appeal to the government, the Minister of Community Safety and the Attorney General to very seriously consider the need for a public inquiry with respect to what happened here. This is a very, very disturbing and serious public safety issue. I think that we need to know what went wrong and why, where the \$9 million went, who made those decisions and who was involved, and who authorized it. I think another question which perhaps we can never answer: How many crimes were committed by individuals who were missed by the registry, who we failed to ensure were in the system and whose movements were being monitored through the sex offender registry?

There's a whole series of questions with respect to the OPP. The current commissioner, Commissioner Fantino, has, I think, responded in a very admirable way to these concerns, but we're going back a number of years in some respects with some of this.

I think we need to know what was involved, and I think that if any issue that's confronted us over the past number of years in this place cries out for a public inquiry, this is it. This is it, and I call on the government to do the right thing: call a public inquiry.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to respond to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in his remarks today, and also to welcome the municipal leaders from around the province who have joined us, including my own mayor, Mayor Eisenberger, from the city of Hamilton.

I have to tell you that it's really sad that four years after the McGuinty government was elected the first time, we are still in a situation where municipalities in this province are being starved. They're being starved because this government simply refuses to pay its bills and refuses to establish the real, concrete measures that need to be established in this province to ensure that municipalities are thriving.

During the election campaign, in fact, many of the parties were talking about this. I can recall, and, in fact, the minister is very pleased and proud in terms of his remarks on what they plan to do, but the Liberal Party vision—I'm quoting from a Toronto Star article that was published during the campaign: "The Liberal Party vision is too much of the same old slow, sad song."

That's the reality here in the province of Ontario. These municipalities simply should not have to come to this Legislature year over year with cap in hand to get some real systemic change happening that's going to make positive impacts, not only on the municipalities' abilities to fund their programs but also to provide the kind of relief that property taxpayers in this province deserve, because the provincial programs that you're not paying for are being paid for on the property tax base. We are literally the only jurisdiction, probably in the entire G8, that has this unbelievable situation. And we wonder why our municipalities are in trouble. I can tell you, it's because this government has not been diligent in its efforts to try to fix the problem that was created by the previous government before them, and that's the down-loading.

What do we need to do? We need to see an immediate 50% operating-cost sharing of transit in all municipalities in Ontario. That's what we need to see. We need to see that right away. It'll make a huge difference. We need to see provincially mandated programs paid for by this government the way they're supposed to be paid for by this government. That's what we need to see. We need the rebalancing of the fiscal relationship now—now, not five years from now, not 10 years from now.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Minister of Community Safety, who brags about a 95% compliance rate: You see, we're worried about the 5% of noncompliant sex offenders. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that the convicted sex offender who doesn't register is one who has a scheme, a plan, and is far more likely to re-offend. Those are the people who constitute the most significant danger out there. They're the ones you ignore.

Where have you been? Where's this government been for the last four years when it comes to protecting kids and women from predatory sex offenders? The government has shown absolute disinterest in the welfare of people in community after community and, indeed, has had the oversight of a system that has not only been negligent in its development but has also been peculiarly skimped of nine million scarce law-enforcement public-safety dollars. I am hard pressed, New Democrats are hard pressed, to believe that somehow the minister and the government could hear no evil, see no evil, never mind speak no evil, as nine million bucks was being diverted away from the essential funding to an effective sex offender registry to other areas of policing.

We join with the Conservatives in calling for a public inquiry into this debacle. This minister has not demonstrated any responsibility or accountability by purporting to comply with some of the recommendations of the Auditor General.

Where's this government been for the last four years? Why did it take the Auditor General to expose these clear deficiencies when this government has been at the helm

for four years, putting people at risk, communities at risk, and displaying a complete lack of concern around community safety here in the province of Ontario?

1420

VENTURE CAPITAL FUND

Mr. Michael Prue: My response is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Gladly would I accept what you had to say today, except that back in 2005 your same government, under the previous Minister of Finance, cancelled the labour-sponsored investment fund. They cancelled the fund that was set up in 1999, a federal-provincial fund, which did exactly the same—probably better—as what you are attempting to do here today. They gave 15% to 20% of tax rebate that levered new growth. It levered some \$600 million, and for the last two years it has done virtually nothing. When I spoke to the then finance minister, he continued down the path, and your government continued to do that until today, and now you come back with a very weak plan, I might suggest. Today is a tacit admission, I have to say, of the failure of your government for the past two years.

VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity today to acknowledge the staff and students from Sir Wilfrid Laurier school in the riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, my riding. Please stand up.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier, dealing with the Auditor General's report and, specifically, his findings related to the sex offender registry. I'm sure the Premier would share our view that the findings are deeply disturbing, serious, in terms of protecting the public and the fact that the monies allocated by the government to administer the registry—some \$9 million over a period of years—were diverted to other uses. Premier, given the nature of this and its impact on public safety, earlier today I called on your government to call a public inquiry into what happened, supported by the third party as well. Will you support that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: No, we will not call a public inquiry. We appreciate what the Auditor General has done today in tabling his report. He has given us some very, very good recommendations. I thank him for those recommendations, and we'll act on them.

I want to repeat what he said at the beginning of the summary of his report: "A dedicated team of OPP officers and support personnel from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services ... has worked diligently and cost-effectively over the last six years to create a working registry that helps the police investigate sexual crimes and monitor sex offenders in their local communities."

Is the system perfect? No. Will we achieve 100% compliance? We will do everything possible to achieve 100% compliance.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, I'd use a word, but you ruled it unparliamentary last week.

There's no question: We're talking about an issue here where the Auditor General has pointed out that we have had hundreds of sex offenders roaming the streets in neighbourhoods of the province of Ontario over the past few years, unaccounted for, and this minister is hiding behind legislation that he's tabling today rather than dealing with what has happened over the past four and a half years, how serious an issue this is, why it happened, and why the OPP diverted money when they were not operating the sex offender registry in an appropriate way to protect the citizens of Ontario. He has an obligation to stand in his place today and explain why he thinks it's sufficient to just go forward and not address the problems that occurred in the past four and a half years that he has been in office and how it could have jeopardized public safety in this province. Answer that.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We've already acted on many of the recommendations that the Auditor General has put forth. We haven't sat back and done nothing, as he would like to infer, which is wrong.

We, on both sides of this House, should be talking about building confidence in a system that is working, a system that has a 95% compliance rate, a system that obviously can improve but at this point in time is working very, very well. You know, I referred to a media release from Ontario police leaders, who support the proposed changes to the province's sex offender registry.

Listen, it's not perfect. The Auditor General has pointed out where we can make improvements. We have started to make those improvements; we will continue to make those improvements as we go on.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That's a pretty sad response given what's happened over the past four or five years. I mentioned in my response to the legislation that we don't know how many crimes were committed as a result of the failings of the sex offender registry over the past number of years. I think that should be important and of interest to the current government, why it happened.

The auditor talks about the \$9 million that was diverted to other issues. We don't know what they are. I think the minister has an obligation to tell us where that money went and who was involved in making those decisions. What role did the government have in making those decisions? Recommendation 6 that the auditor makes: "to ensure that all funds that are approved for

registry purposes are actually spent on registry activities." In the government's response, they declined to make that kind of commitment, indeed rubber-stamping the diversion of much-needed funds to protect the people of Ontario. Stand up and defend that. Explain to the people of Ontario where that money went, who was involved and how it may have endangered the safety of Ontarians.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, let me tell you first of all, and let me inform the member, who should know this little fact, that we do not interfere with the operations of the OPP. He should clearly know that, because if you go back and you look at the money that was reallocated over the course of the last several years, you'll find out that 40% of the money that was reallocated was reallocated under his watch, that government's watch. In 1999-2000, \$407,000 was not spent on the directory; in 2000-01, \$403,000 was not spent on the directory; in 2001-02, \$940,000 was not spent on the directory. It was reallocated to other priority areas of the OPP. It was—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The member from Durham.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in yet another example of how your government has failed to take seriously the health and safety of the citizens of Ontario, our Auditor General has found, shockingly, that in 2006 collision rates were 62% greater amongst drivers who had completed a government-approved driver education course over those who had no driver education course. Can the Premier possibly explain to this House why drivers who have completed a government-approved course are more likely to be involved in a collision than those who have completed no such course?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I don't want to get into the past; I want to talk about the future. I think that is important.

First of all, I want to commend the Provincial Auditor for doing another outstanding job. One of the virtues we have in our democratic system is we have officers of the House such as the Provincial Auditor who are able to take an independent and outside look at the way government operates. I want to assure the member that with the findings he has made and with the recommendations that he has made, the Ministry of Transportation is already moving on these. That's an advantage that ministries have. I think the acting Leader of the Opposition mentioned yesterday we get that opportunity, so in the supplementary I'll be more specific than I was. But I want to thank the auditor for doing a good job. We want to comply with what he is suggesting we comply with.

1430

Mr. John O'Toole: That diversion of an answer—we're all happy to have an auditor. Thank God the people

of Ontario have an auditor who is concerned about the drivers who are more dangerous when they have completed a driver education course approved by your ministry. It absolutely makes no sense, Minister.

The auditor highlights the concerns of several stakeholders who are worried that some unscrupulous driving schools are selling certificates to drivers who haven't earned them; meanwhile, the government has turned a blind eye. Why is the government ignoring these facts? Why isn't it ensuring that new drivers can safely operate the cars they drive, and why aren't they taking seriously the potential fraud that exists in the system you are the minister of?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say to the member that that is precisely what officials in the Ministry of Transportation are doing at this time with the findings of the auditor, and he has been very assiduous in pointing out some of the concerns and how he believes the Ministry of Transportation can move expeditiously to deal with them. I want to assure the member that that in fact is the case.

The licensing of unqualified drivers is simply not acceptable to me and, I really don't think, to any members of this House. We will suspend any organization found to be licensing unqualified drivers. In the New Year, an improved inspection process will target and follow up on organizations that have unacceptable practices in place.

So when we look at any problems that have been identified, I think you will find that, by and large, the ministry has already moved on them and we are undertaking to take further action to comply with everything the auditor has suggested.

Mr. John O'Toole: Quite frankly, the auditor has, year after year for the last four years, made very similar audit comments, and yet we're still in this serious dilemma. In fact, here is what the auditor said: "The ministry's inspection of ... driving schools had not focused on ensuring that the training was in accordance with the ministry-approved curriculum. Where inspections were done, many cases of significant non-compliance were disregarded" completely.

The government is falling down entirely when it comes to ensuring the safety of new drivers on our highways in the province of Ontario. My question again: Why has this government repeatedly turned a blind eye to these challenging and very serious issues of fraud as well as public safety? Please answer that question.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I thank the member for raising that issue. I guess one of the advantages you have when you're a new minister of a particular portfolio is that you have the opportunity to take a new look at some of the challenges that are out there, and I think he has raised, fair enough, some challenges that are there.

He mentioned, for instance—I think all of us would find this odd—that if you went to a driving school, the rate of accidents is higher. We now have an outside person looking at that to determine why that would be and what all the factors are. But one of them that you

might consider—and British Columbia did—is that it might well be that if you get one of these certificates, you don't have to go the full year before you reach the next stage of licensing. I think you go eight months instead of the full year. It may well be that that is the reason, and so we're going to look at what British Columbia is doing and what other jurisdictions are doing. But I want to tell the member that we're prepared to act on everything the Provincial Auditor has suggested we act upon.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Council of the Senate of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, led by Senator Oleg Tolkachev. Accompanying the delegation is the Honourable Andrey Veklenko, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Toronto, and other guests. Please join me in welcoming our guests today.

DRIVER EDUCATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. It has been evident for over five years that new drivers who take the Ministry of Transportation approved beginning driver education program are far more likely to have a traffic collision than new drivers who don't take the course. Do you see a problem with that, and if you see a problem with that, why did your government not act on it for four years?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have a note coming here that may or may not be helpful, but I want to say to the member that he raises, through the Provincial Auditor's report, a very good question. As I indicated, we have within the ministry an outside organization—a person—looking at what the reasons for that could be. Because it's illogical to you and to me; it's counterintuitive to think that if you've gone to driving school, you're going to have more accidents than otherwise. The ministry has already acted upon some of the findings that were in the 2005 auditor's report and has implemented those.

In the supplementary, unless he moves to another area, I will try to answer some of the questions that he's dealing with. I want to repeat what I said, that one of the considerations is what British Columbia found and it's that shortened period for being able to get the licence.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister talks about something being illogical. What is illogical is that the Ministry of Transportation has known about this for five years and did nothing. For five years the Ministry of Transportation approved a driver education program. It's been a fact that students who take that are more likely to get into a serious traffic collision than students who don't take it. The issue is this: How could you know about this

serious threat to public safety and for four years do absolutely nothing about it?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The characterization that the leader of the third party would have is not the characterization I would say has been the case with the Ministry of Transportation. The Ministry of Transportation has been addressing the auditor's findings with changes and the ministry will follow through to fix all the concerns that he has mentioned.

The ministry is looking at the possibility that the higher collision rates, as I mentioned, are as a result of the certificate being obtained in eight months instead of the full year. We also began regulating the BDE schools, the driver education schools, last year in compliance with provincial standards. They're being monitored and strongly enforced wherever necessary.

In the last year, we have removed 22 schools from our ministry-approved lists because they weren't up to standard. Based on the recommendations in the auditor's report, over the past few weeks we have notified an additional eight driving schools of our intent to remove them from the ministry's approved list.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Actually, the Auditor General tells us how this could happen. He points out, for example, that a driving instructor who was hired in February 2007 had four demerit points himself and had received six licence suspensions since August 2004, all of which happened under the McGuinty government. He also noted that two driving instructors had been convicted of fraud under \$5,000, including falsifying student records, and were still licensed as student driving instructors.

This has been happening for five years—four years under the McGuinty government—yet the Auditor General says you've effectively done nothing. Tell the people of Ontario how this can happen and the McGuinty government effectively does nothing.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can say to the leader of the third party that it would be interesting to go back to some of the auditor's reports when he was in power and he had—

Mr. Howard Hampton: You and Bob again?

Hon. James J. Bradley: No. He likes to try to get out of it by talking about the person who was the leader, as though all of them were asleep for the full five years. But I don't think that's as important as what is happening now.

In response to the auditor's report, the ministry is tightening standards for driver education and driving instructors; we're making it so that the ministry will not licence a new driving instructor if that person has a single demerit point or a criminal conviction. And the ministry has tightened requirements for driving instructors' licences and has reduced the allowable number of demerit points an instructor can acquire. If an instructor is found not to be satisfactory, that licence will be pulled by the Ministry of Transportation. I give the member my assurance that I will ensure all these things are done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

1440

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: The Auditor General says that all too often pharmacies are routinely charging more than the drug formulary price for prescription drugs. In fact, I can quote him: "In February 2007 ... more than 30% of the unit drug prices ... exceeded the formulary price by 12,500%, resulting in the ministry paying almost \$2,400 for a claim that ... should have cost less than \$20."

Premier, why hasn't your government acted effectively to stop this kind of price gouging?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: As always, we thank the Auditor General. The examination of elements at the Ministry of Health helps us to do our work better.

I'm pleased to tell the honourable member that the very mechanism that was referred to in the Auditor General's report, which is called cost-to-operator, was taken out of play for generic drugs in June 2007 and for almost all brand-name drugs as of August 1, 2007. So the very mechanism that proved problematic has been eliminated, but there is more work to be done on this. I'm very pleased to say that within about a month a draft model will be revealed and consulted on, which relates to a variety of options around pharmacist compensation models.

This is all part and parcel of the initiative that this Legislature passed, called Bill 102. It is a work in progress. We've made some progress already on the most egregious circumstances highlighted by the auditor. There is more work to be done, and his efforts stimulate ours.

Mr. Howard Hampton: As usual, the McGuinty government wants us to believe that after the horse has left the barn, they've got the situation well under control. But the Auditor General says that the real issue was that you weren't using your own enforcement powers, that the Ministry of Health has not taken any action against drug companies that do not comply with the formulary price.

Premier, why wasn't the Ministry of Health, under the McGuinty government, using its enforcement powers? Why weren't you enforcing your own rules?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm not sure if the honourable member was deliberate in suggesting that drug companies are the same as pharmacies; I don't believe that was the Auditor General's suggestion.

But on the matter at hand raised by the Auditor General, in the time since his investigation, as a result of the changes brought about by Bill 102, the cost-to-operator mechanism which was relied upon by pharmacies for the kind of cost creep that was discussed by the auditor is no longer possible in the province of Ontario.

We do have more work to do, for sure, to enhance these circumstances and to bring in, as I identified in my

earlier answer, a new model for reimbursement with respect to pharmacies. But I can tell Ontarians that we've made substantial progress, even in the time since that report was worked on. There is more to do, and I'll be looking forward to opportunities to make all members of the House aware of those changes.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again the Auditor General, with respect, disagrees. He says the real issue is enforcement. He says that despite two previous warnings to your government, "a reduction in the number of field inspection staff has significantly reduced the inspection coverage of dispensing agencies. Currently," Ministry of Health "inspectors can only examine each dispensing agency about once every 30 years."

You want the people to believe that the situation has improved; the Auditor General says no, that it's actually gotten worse.

Can the minister tell us, given the practices the auditor has uncovered, do you think one inspection every 30 years is going to protect the public and the consumers of the province?

Hon. George Smitherman: What I do think is that a mechanism which was the subject of abuse is no longer available, and that's a good step in the right direction.

I do agree that there are always opportunities in the breadth of the Ministry of Health to have a greater resource related to inspection and enforcement. We try to balance that out with the necessity of providing resources to those who are working on the front lines in delivering clinical care.

We've made good progress already on the areas where the Auditor General and his staff have done work. There is more to be done, as I've acknowledged and as I've indicated to the honourable member in my earlier answer. I'll look forward to an early opportunity to bring that information back to the House for the benefit of all members and, indeed, Ontarians.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. The auditor has uncovered yet another area where the government is failing to protect the health and safety of Ontarians. For the second year in a row, the auditor has damned the wait times reduction program. Specifically, he has found that only 14% of all surgeries are covered by the program and he was shocked and surprised to find that the government has no idea how many operating rooms are in the province. He found that 12% of them sit empty most weekdays, and sometimes as many as 40% are empty. Meanwhile, we also learned from his report that people are waiting years—yes, I say "years"—for knee replacements.

If the government is really serious about reducing wait times, and you've talked about it now for years, why are so many operating rooms sitting empty and why don't you know anything about them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: Maybe the honourable member would like to be reminded of her time in office as the Minister of Health for one reason, which is important. As the longest-serving Minister of Health in the Harris government, she had the opportunity to do something about the capacity the system has to manage wait times and she didn't do anything.

In the time since I've had the privilege of being Minister of Health, we've introduced the wait time information system. It is expanding on a daily basis, enhancing the capacity to manage the health care system. Because the people of Ontario rejected their \$3 billion cut to health care, we're now in a position to expand the wait time information focus to the broad array of the surgical platform of general surgery, which is 40% of all the surgical activity in our hospitals. So the wait time information system is now established, taking benefit and trying to make up for the lost time squandered on the part of that honourable member.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's unbelievable. This minister is in his fifth year and he's still blaming the Harris government. If you can't do the job, get out of the kitchen and give it to one of the other people in your caucus. It's really quite simple.

The wait time reduction system that this minister continues to tell us is up to date and reliable is not. The auditor proved it today. The hospitals aren't using the wait times information system to monitor and manage wait lists; nor are the surgeons. There is so much more to be done. I would say to you, you've tried to cover it up with misleading ads and bluster. Why is the wait time information system not doing what you promised it would do?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to retract the comments that she made, please. Have respect for the Legislature.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: If I said something unparliamentary, I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You did.

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, if she carefully re-reads what she said, has made references to the auditor's comments today which I think on themselves don't hold up. Here's what he said: The ministry "has introduced several encouraging initiatives in connection with its wait time strategy designed to help hospitals improve their surgical processes." Here are the results: angiography down 60.7%, angioplasty down 50%, cataract surgery down 54.7%, hip replacement down 37.9%, knee replacement down 35.2%, CT scan down 30.9%, cancer surgery down 14.8%. And because the people of Ontario rejected her party's \$3-billion cut, more wait times are coming down.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier, how could this government, in the years 2003 to 2007, have allowed money that was budgeted for the development of the sex offender registry to be spent by the OPP on other polic-

ing operations, especially when this government knew that that registry was in shambles?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member knows full well that we do not infringe on the operating opportunities of the OPP, but let me just tell you what the money was spent on. Some \$8.7 million has been used to offset the cost of physicians within the behavioural science unit for work that supports the registry's mandate, as well as other public safety policing priorities, including post-911 security.

Our government will never interfere with the operating of the OPP. The commissioner is in charge of that. We will ensure that we protect the integrity of the system by allowing the commissioner of the OPP to manage his budget.

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's clear that the sex offender registry has been and remains in shambles: Almost 400 sex offenders wandering Ontario are not registered, and a computer system that fails police officers who want to locate speedily a sex offender. Why would this government have allowed that registry to fall into such a state of shambles, or is it blaming the OPP for negligence in not building an effective sex offender registry?

1450

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let's understand. I think it's over there that they are criticizing the OPP. We support the OPP. We support the recommendations of the Auditor General—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order in the opposition benches, please.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: All money should be allocated towards the sex registry that is assigned to it, and we will ensure, as the commissioner has said, that from here on in, the Ontario Sex Offender Registry's allocation will be spent on that allocation. The commissioner of the OPP, a person that we should all respect and trust, has assured us that that will happen.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, today is Injured Workers' Day. Rallies are held across the province, and I know one was held outside your office earlier today.

In 2006, there were more than 260,000 workplace injuries in this province. Recently, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board was criticized by some and complimented by others for the graphic nature of its television ads that highlight workplace injuries. The goal of the ad campaign, of course, is to raise awareness that injuries and deaths on the job are preventable. We know, however, that there will be injuries to workers. I want to know from the minister, what is the government going to do to help injured workers in my riding of Hamilton Mountain and the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for that question, as well as for her advocacy when it comes to injured workers in the Hamilton area. She has had the opportunity to speak to me, and I know she really does care about injured workers, as does this entire government, as our last four years in office have demonstrated.

Our government is committed to creating a brighter future for injured workers. We've taken action to put more money into the hands of injured workers through benefit increases and reforms to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. For the past 12 years—Mr. Speaker, I know you would know this—erosion of inflation protection under the NDP's Friedland formula and the Tories' modified Friedland formula saw injured workers' benefits increase by only 2.9%, while inflation rose by 29%. We're going in a different direction. Changes in our last budget helped address this situation by enhancing the benefits for more than 155,000 injured workers by 2.5% on July 1, 2.5% in another month, and 2.5% on January—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Minister, we want injured workers in this province to know that every effort will be made to help them return to work. The Hamilton and District Injured Workers' Group in my riding is a strong advocate group for injured workers. I know when I meet with them in the new year, they will ask me about what we are doing as a province to help injured workers return to the workplace. I would like the minister to elaborate for me and my constituents just what assistance is provided to injured workers.

Hon. Brad Duguid: In fact in 2007-08, we've increased the Office of the Worker Adviser funding by another \$1.4 million. Mr. Speaker, I know you would know about that, sir, because I know you are responsible for doing that, so I commend you for that.

The Office of the Worker Adviser will also receive an additional \$810,000 per year in ongoing funding. Also, the WSIB increased expense allowances for injured workers in both January 2006 and January 2007. In fact, as I said before, since 1995 when the NDP removed full inflation protection for workers, we've gone in the opposite direction. When you compare the 12 years prior to the 2007 budget to the year and a half preceding the 2007 budget, we're left looking at a very big difference—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. The auditor's report details story after story about how this government is failing to protect the health and safety of Ontario citizens. The failures in the Ministry of the Environment when it comes to hazardous waste are scandalous. The auditor found that 5,000 shipments of

hazardous waste were made by unregistered generators, and I quote, "The ministry could not explain to us why the generators were not registered." And worse, the ministry made no attempt to follow up with the unregistered generators.

For a government that likes to pontificate about its environmental record that is a scandal right now, why isn't the government taking the transportation of hazardous waste seriously?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In the absence of the Minister of the Environment, I welcome the question.

First of all, let me just say to the Auditor General and his staff that we thank you for the report. That particular office is nothing if not thorough, and their recommendations and advice are always helpful.

I know there were 11 separate recommendations offered to the Minister of the Environment in this regard. I also know that each of those was responded to by the ministry. I can say as well, whether it's the matter of inspections, computer systems or dealing with household waste, that there have been separate responses to each and every one of those. I know the Minister of the Environment looks forward to continuing to make additional progress when it comes to treating hazardous waste in the province of Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott: When the Auditor General still reports that your Ministry of the Environment knew and you did nothing about it, maybe we should ask the auditor to investigate how much hazardous waste is being produced here by the Premier this afternoon in this Legislature.

The story quite simply keeps getting worse. The auditor found there were 26,000 shipments of hazardous waste where the amount sent out was less than the amount received—more than half. That's more than 13,000 that had variances that fell outside of acceptable guidelines. In some cases, 90% of the shipment was lost somewhere between the generator and the receiver, and this government took no action to follow up. Why should Ontarians have any faith in this government's commitment, let alone its ability, to protect their health and safety where hazardous waste is concerned? Why should—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In fact, there was the kernel of a good question there, and I want to speak to that. That question was: Why should Ontarians have faith in our ability and our determination to follow up on recommendations and advice offered by the Auditor General?

Here's what the Auditor General said about the Conservatives in his 2003 annual report, and he quotes that again in this year's report: "It was apparent to us this year that there were far too many areas where prior-year concerns—often going back four, five, six, seven, or even 10 years, had not been satisfactorily addressed ... there is no excuse for a lack of effective action...." This year, the auditor says that we have fully implemented 44% of the recommendations he made two years ago and

have made progress on more than 80%, in contrast to 15% on the Tory watch.

There is always more work to be done, still more progress to be made, but the record clearly demonstrates that when it comes to following up on recommendations coming from the Auditor General, we are there, four-square, making progress on behalf of Ontarians.

CONSERVATION OFFICERS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The auditor's report points out this year what many have known, that conservation officers across this province are unable to do their jobs mandated by this Legislature. In fact, they're not able to enforce the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. In one particular section of the report, it says, "In the case of one unit, we noted that regular patrols were suspended by mid-November 2006 for lack of funds, even though the deer hunting season still had another 10 days...."

Premier, my question is simply this: Why have you allowed this to happen under your watch?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank you for the question. As a matter of fact, it has been stopped. We've put an extra \$1.6 million into that particular operating budget. We still have the same number of conservation officers we've always had, 300 of them. So now with the added money that was put in, we're able to continue on to do the work that is required of the conservation officers, protecting wildlife in this province.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the reality is that you're not doing a very good job. The reality is that conservation officers don't have the funding to go into the bush to do what they're mandated to do by this Legislature. Across Ontario, we have conservation officers who are lucky if they're able to put fuel in their trucks and get out in the bush one or two days a week. They held bake sales all last winter to raise money to put gas in their trucks. So I ask you the question again: Why has this been allowed to happen under your watch, and what are you going to do to fix it?

1500

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: As a matter of fact, the officers did not hold bake sales. There were other folks who actually held the bake sales for them to raise what they felt was an issue. Unfortunately, they didn't give the officers the money that they did raise. They kept it. Having said that, we gave them the money, the \$1.6 million, they required to be able to continue the operation. There's no question that they are the finest when it comes to enforcing the laws of Ontario for the protection of animal rights. They are without a doubt incredible people who work hard every day on behalf of the people of this province, and we should be very proud of the work they do. We did what the Auditor General had indicated, and we were ahead of the game and had already put the money in place.

TOURISM

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Tourism. The tourism industry is a vital part of Ontario's economy. As a matter of fact, in my riding it's a toss-up whether agriculture or tourism is the biggest industry. This year in Ontario we've already had quite a bit of snow and cold weather, which are great for the tourism industry. In my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, there's an abundance of activities that visitors can enjoy, from snowmobiling to snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, for example, at Presqu'île Provincial Park, the Loomis conservation area, the county forest, which is part of Ganaraska, and the Batawa ski hill. Can you inform the members of this House what other events and activities are available to people travelling in Ontario during these winter months?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Tourism and Recreation.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election. I want to thank the member for Northumberland-Quinte West, a great tourism destination, for his question. The member is correct in saying that tourism is so vital to our economy. In fact, it touches every community, every riding across this province. We have beautiful scenery, spectacular cultural attractions and exciting festivals and events. Ontario is also packed with outstanding outdoor activities for families and travellers to get out and enjoy.

We have ski hills and trails across this province that faced high temperatures and a lack of snow last season. This season they've received an incredible amount of fresh snow, and that, along with extensive snow making, has made for an outstanding ski season already.

All across this province there's a full range of activities, from skating on the Rideau Canal to attending Winterlude, the ice wine festival in Niagara region, or snowmobiling on our gorgeous trails. It's going to be a great winter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary, member from Sault Ste. Marie.

Mr. David Oraziatti: Mr. Speaker, congratulations on your new position. Minister, the constituents of my riding of Sault Ste. Marie understand the full economic impact that tourism has on our community. As you know, the summer is a very busy time for festivals, but winter is also an exciting time in Ontario, with many festivals and events that draw visitors from across the globe. In my riding, one of the ways we celebrate winter is the Bon Soo Winter Carnival. Last year, our government contributed more than \$10,000 to this annual celebration, which brings residents from the US and Canada to participate in ice sculptures, skating events, the renowned polar bear swim, as well as other outdoor activities. We're proud to support this event again. Minister, given some of the challenges that the tourism industry is facing as a result of the high dollar, what festivals and events are taking place across the province this winter to

encourage more Ontarians to spend their vacation dollars at home while attracting more tourists from abroad?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member from Sault Ste. Marie for giving me the opportunity to talk about the many great festivals like Bon Soo and other events happening across Ontario this winter. I know that every region in the province celebrates winter the Ontario way with world-class festivals and events, tourism attractions such as Upper Canada Village Alight at Night festival, or travellers can stop in and catch a performance of White Christmas at the Sony Centre in downtown Toronto. Both of these events were enhanced by our Celebrate Ontario program last year. We also continue to promote Ontario to the rest of the world, like a giant snow globe that we have right now in downtown Manhattan, it's going to be featured on Good Morning America this Monday, and that will also be travelling throughout Ontario.

I also want to encourage all families to get out and enjoy Family Day in February, being tourists in their own province. We have an abundance of activities and family events.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, we asked you about the scandalous dispensing fees that were really sucking the medication programs in our long-term-care facilities dry. We learned today that the situation when it comes to medication programs is even worse than we had originally thought. We see that about one third of the money is going into the pockets of those dispensing the drugs and is not having any impact on the care of residents.

Premier, my question to you is, how can you justify shortchanging the residents of long-term-care facilities and not giving them the money that they've been asking for for personal care, which you promised back in 2003, and that it's going into the pockets of these other people?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm very proud to tell the honourable member that the level of care that's being provided in Ontario's long-term-care homes today is far superior to that which we inherited. At least 0.6 hour per resident day is the implication to date, with about \$1 billion of public investment.

With respect to the matters of medication, I think these have been discussed in the House through question period today. As I mentioned, the cost-to-operator claim was a mechanism that was resulting in some egregious cost increases, but the door has been shut on that mechanism for many, many months now, following the passage by this Legislature of Bill 102, which I'm very pleased to say is leading us forward in reforming the system and ensuring that we get the best possible value for the patient dollar. Accordingly, it would have been nice to see support on that bill from the opposite side.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, the hole that he says has been plugged wasn't plugged. The numbers

he was given yesterday were for November and October, so he should check again.

However, we hear from a minister who promised a revolution, and then this summer we hear about seniors sitting in diapers that are 75% wet. Now we hear in the auditor's report today about the fact that there were 18,000 level 1 drug alerts generated at pharmacies, indicating a high-risk combination of drugs; 91% were overridden by pharmacists with no record of consultation with doctors.

The health and safety of our vulnerable seniors is at risk, and this government is negligent when it comes to appropriately monitoring the level of care in our homes. I ask the minister today, what else is going on in the long-term-care homes that he has turned a blind eye to?

Hon. George Smitherman: Some of the initiatives that are ongoing in long-term-care homes are increasing the comfort allowance many, many times, something that was never done by the party opposite; enhancing the accommodation rates; building new long-term-care homes; rebuilding B and C long-term-care homes; substantially increasing the amount of raw food; and making a variety of similar adjustments.

On the issue of medication which the honourable member raises, I think it's noteworthy that in her question she speaks about two regulated health professionals, physicians and pharmacists. Accordingly, much of the regulation and oversight that she seeks is provided by self-governing associations, and we'll certainly be asking similar hard questions of the colleges as we seek to ensure that they are fulfilling their important responsibilities.

Like I said earlier, the Auditor General's report is very helpful to us and we appreciate the work that they've done. We'll be taking all of the information that they've brought forward as direction and improving these circumstances. As I mentioned before, I'll look forward to updating the House on those initiatives.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Le vérificateur général a écrit dans son rapport que deux des trois foyers de soins de longue durée qu'ils ont visités ne disposent d'aucun document confirmant qu'ils avaient obtenu le consentement éclairé nécessaire pour administrer un nouveau médicament à un résident.

Je vous demande, Monsieur le premier ministre, est-ce que nos aînés dans les résidences de soins de longue durée en Ontario se font droguer contre leur gré?

1510

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health

Hon. George Smitherman: The provision of medication in long-term-care environments was the subject of Bill 102. We took advice on the matter of inappropriate use of drugs for our seniors. We really followed a lot of advice that was on offer by Frances Lankin, who, as a

former member of this Legislature and of your party's caucus, was very vocal and passionate around this. As my then-parliamentary assistant, Monique Smith, worked on developing that legislation, she really did seek out a lot of input from the aforementioned individual. I'd be happy to try to answer further on the supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Auditor General goes on to say that there were unreported medication errors in all the long-term-care homes they visited; that there is wide use of high-risk drugs; and that a quarter, 25%, of residents are on 12 or more medications and there are no policies to monitor adverse drug reactions.

Premier, are Ontario seniors in long-term-care being overmedicated and given inappropriate drugs without consent and without proper monitoring?

Hon. George Smitherman: No. I think two issues would be helpful. The first is to repeat what I said a moment ago. The responsibility for ordering drugs is fulfilled by regulated health professionals: doctors and pharmacists or the partners in those relationships. It is possible that a patient or a client or resident might have 12 drugs listed. That means that a physician has approved their use; it does not mean they are all in use.

I do think this is an area that does call upon us to ensure that those regulated parties are fulfilling their responsibility. In the broader sector, we've brought in MedsCheck, which takes a hard look at any circumstance where a patient is using more than three drugs for chronic diseases. Accordingly, we think there are opportunities to enhance this sort of surveillance on the population of long-term-care residents, something I'd be very happy to work with the honourable member on.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Culture—and congratulations, Minister.

Ontario libraries are very important community hubs for information, learning and literacy. In rural communities like the riding of Huron–Bruce, I strongly believe that local libraries serve valuable local needs and also preserve our local rural identity. I'm very proud of the great work that libraries in Huron and Bruce counties are doing in our communities. In the riding of Huron–Bruce, I have over 25 libraries.

Minister, can you please inform the House of what the government is doing to invest in, and how you will support, our rural libraries?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank the member from Huron–Bruce for her question. Indeed, our government does recognize the importance of libraries across our province, and especially in rural communities. That's why we provided a one-time investment of \$5 million to strengthen over 260 rural, remote and First Nations libraries. That helps to contribute to their vitality in the communities.

In Huron–Bruce, two public libraries have recently benefited from our government's investment of \$306,000. We know that Huron County Public Library

and Bruce County Public Library will welcome this funding to assist in learning, literacy and citizen engagement.

Our government understands the value of libraries, and we're especially proud to invest in Ontario libraries in rural communities.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you for highlighting the investments in Huron–Bruce. I can tell you that my constituents and people living in small and rural communities are very pleased to know that the government supports learning hubs in all of our communities across the province by strengthening our communities through the hubs.

While these direct investments are absolutely crucial to our small communities, I know that we're providing more help for our local libraries. Minister, could you please tell us what else you are doing to assist libraries in my riding and throughout all of Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Besides the \$5-million investment in small and rural libraries, which the honourable member has mentioned, we are indeed making other contributions as well.

We're investing in a virtual reference library so that communities—small or large, urban or rural—can easily access information online. We're also providing funding to address the connectivity needs of libraries across our province, so that geographic boundaries are not barriers to learning. Finally, because libraries are indeed the hub of many communities, ServiceOntario uses libraries so that Ontarians can readily access important government services and important government information from home without having to travel great distances.

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. People across Ontario are rightly worried about what is happening with the hazardous waste that is being transported on our roads and highways. The Premier talks about responding to the auditor, but his government has ignored the problem for years and now claims that they're acting only after being caught. When 90% of a hazardous waste shipment goes missing and the government does nothing to investigate until the auditor raises the issue, we're left to conclude that there are no internal controls. This is a government that wants us to take them seriously when it comes to pollution reduction, but their actions don't match up with reality. Can the Premier please tell the House and the people of Ontario where the hazardous waste is going?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know the Minister of the Environment, upon his return from Bali, is going to want to keep working on this particular issue, but I think there's one—you know, it's a lengthy Auditor General's report, and it all makes for very good reading, of course. But I want to refer you to page 27. There is a fabulous chart there, which is called "Figure 1: Percentage of Audit Follow-ups Noting Significant Progress in Addressing Our Recommendations of Two Years

Earlier." It goes from 1998 to 2007. In 2004, it takes a dramatic, sharp increase upwards, and it's been going up ever since.

As I said in my last question, the reason that Ontarians can and should have confidence in their government when it comes to following up on the advice of the Auditor General is because of our record. We have a very good record. In fact, it's the best record of any government in the history of this province when it comes to following up on the auditor's recommendations.

Ms. Laurie Scott: But when the Premier, who has seen the Auditor General's report—I know he quoted a graph. But the auditor said that up to 90% of shipments of hazardous waste are still going missing. You can't still use the refrain, "Don't worry, be happy." It's not good enough. The Auditor General has said that up to 90% of shipments of hazardous waste are not accounted for. Things are not under control. That is not reality. The government has ignored the problems for years. So again, I ask the Premier, where's the hazardous waste going?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, to put this in some context, I think Ontarians really want to know about our commitment to the environment. Let me just talk about some of the things that we've done on that score. We've got a new Clean Water Act, the best of its kind in the country. We've got a new law protecting endangered species, the best of its kind in the country. We've protected a green space larger than Prince Edward Island. We have an aggressive, ambitious yet highly achievable climate change plan, which is devoted to assuming our responsibility as global citizens in the face of a global challenge, which is climate change. And of course, we are very concerned about treating hazardous waste. That's why we brought the first law of its kind in Ontario which bans the land disposal of untreated hazardous waste in our province. That wasn't there before. So yes, we will carefully examine and follow up on each and every one of the recommendations brought forward by the Auditor General.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Will the government listen to injured workers, whom I joined at the 16th Annual Injured Workers Christmas Demonstration this morning? I didn't see any other government members besides you, Minister, and you left halfway through. Will he eliminate deeming and determining, eliminate the experience rating, guarantee coverage for all workers, and provide full permanent cost of living for people receiving benefits? Will he or won't he?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Indeed, it was my privilege this morning to join injured workers, a tradition begun by my predecessor, Mr. Bentley, and continued by yourself, Mr. Speaker, something that no other Ministers of Labour had ever done before. So I was privileged and honoured to meet with those injured workers.

Here are some of the stories that they had to tell. We were there to listen. I think the fact that we were there

shows that we are very earnest in wanting to listen to their concerns. But over the last four years, we've made a lot of progress when it comes to improving the situation with regard to injured workers across this province. I said earlier on, in a question from the member for Hamilton Mountain, that we've doubled the amount of funding in a year and a half—more than the previous governments did in 12 years.

We care about injured workers and we're going to continue to build on our successes.

1520

Mr. Paul Miller: When will the government deliver fairness for injured workers who have lost the ability to work and take care of their families by providing full coverage of 100% of Ontario's workforce, the support to help injured workers through their most difficult times, and the appropriate assessment and retraining to help injured workers re-enter the workforce?

And to the minister in the front: We were there, Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the question, but I've got to wonder where the NDP were in 1995 when they brought in the Friedland formula. If anything did damage to injured workers in this province, it was that formula. And guess what happened? The Tories modified it later on and made it even worse for injured workers.

We're working very, very hard to turn that around. We're working hard to turn that around because we believe that the Friedland formula brought in under the NDP was a real disaster. It really impacted the lives of injured workers. A 2.5% increase in July, a 2.5% increase this January, another 2.5% increase in January 2008: We care about injured workers and we're putting our money where our mouth is.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question for the Minister of Education. Minister, the member from Halton recently stated that there have been no significant changes to the educational funding formula since 2003. We, on this side of the House, understand that this is simply not the case. Minister, can you remind the member from Halton and all the members of this House about the significant changes we've made to the educational funding formula since 2003?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is absolutely true that the member for Halton has got it wrong. Every year since we've been in office, we've been changing the funding formula. Not only have we put billions of dollars into education to hire more elementary, more primary teachers to reduce class size, more student success teachers to help kids graduate from school, but we've changed the structure of the funding formula. We've put in place a school foundation grant that helps us move away from the per pupil grant and, most significantly for the member from Halton, we've expanded the criteria in the capital grants to allow for growth school funding, and that's something that he seems to have overlooked.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have here a petition signed by a great number of my constituents in the great part of my riding in the town of Tillsonburg. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the undersigned recognized the lack of adequate long-term-care beds in Tillsonburg due to the increasing senior population; and

"Whereas, according to year 2001, the statistics for Tillsonburg were as follows: age 45 to 54: 1,735; age 55 to 64: 1,455; age 65 to 74: 1,580; age 75 to 84: 1,195; age 85 and over: 305; and

"Whereas the present situation of 34 beds at Woodingford Lodge and 101 beds at Maple Manor does not reflect the needs of the 'senior' in need; and

"Whereas the median age of the population in 2001 was 41.4 years of age; and

"Whereas, in the year 2006, the statistics reported 5,160 persons in the 55-plus years of age, approximately 31% of the population; and

"Whereas two adult lifestyle subdivisions have been allowed to build 800 homes, bringing at least 1,000-plus seniors to the area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To act promptly to satisfy the needs of the seniors of Tillsonburg and Ontario."

I attach my signature.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to deliver a petition from the residents of Richmond Hill, "Save the David Dunlap Observatory Lands," a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance; and

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as 'surplus' to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

"Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance."

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: These petitions have come in from Lowbanks, Ayr, Cayuga, Nanticoke and Caledonia requesting land dispute hearings.

"Whereas land dispute deliberations to date have operated under a veil of secrecy, without transparency, and have created a atmosphere of privacy and scepticism, shutting out people from information and decisions that impact them directly; and

"Whereas Ontario's aboriginal affairs minister has indicated, in both the media and during his visit to Caledonia, his intention to garner local public input; and

"Whereas our Ontario Legislative Assembly provides a mechanism for open, accountable, transparent recorded discussion through all-party committee hearings that are open to the media;

"We, the undersigned, petition our provincially elected legislators, representing all political parties, to commence public hearings through a select or standing committee, as soon as possible."

I agree with this proposal and affix my signature.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinais: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Association and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health; and

"Whereas many Ontario health care services lack adequate resources needed to assist women to achieve success for the recommended, well-established timeline;

"We are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take a leadership role in ensuring the provision of adequate breastfeeding support for women in Ontario by:

"(1) Creating a provincial breastfeeding policy in Ontario;

"(2) Initiating a process whereby all Ontario hospitals become baby-friendly as per the WHO/UNICEF guidelines;

"(3) Adequately fund health-care-providing organizations to properly train all health care providers working with new and expectant mothers in hospital and community settings;

"(4) Increase the number of both hospital and community-based"—breastfeeding—"clinics in Ontario;

"(5) Fund the creation of a provincial 'centre for excellence for breastfeeding' which would serve as a training ground for professionals, a centre of research and a fully functioning clinic accessible to all women who require assistance.

"Given the documented and well-known health benefits to our population and subsequent financial benefits to our health care system, it is irresponsible for our provincial government not to support and increase breastfeeding resources in Ontario."

There are 740 names on this petition; I fully support it and will sign it.

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the increase in the number of seats in the federal Parliament. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the government of Canada has proposed legislation to increase the number of seats in the federal Parliament, resulting from the recent data reflecting population growth;

"Whereas, as has become the custom with Stephen Harper's government, Ontario once again is getting the short end of Confederation's stick;

"Whereas this legislation discriminates against Ontario electors by making their vote count for less in the House of Commons, in comparison to electors from other parts of the country, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec; and

"Whereas there is an apathetic concern for the challenges the sluggish US economy and the strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government's efforts in this regard;

"Whereas this injustice hits at the very heart of democracy by creating a House of Commons where every single Canadian vote doesn't carry the same weight;

"We, the undersigned, formally request that in a nation where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equality for all, such an injustice must not be allowed to prevail."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it, and give it to page Annie, who's with me today.

1530

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Sir Frederick Banting was the man who discovered insulin and was Canada's first Nobel Prize recipient; and

"Whereas this great Canadian's original homestead, located in the town of New Tecumseth, Alliston, is deteriorating and in danger of destruction because of the inaction of the Ontario Historical Society; and

"Whereas the town of New Tecumseth has been unsuccessful in reaching an agreement with the Ontario Historical Society to use part of the land to educate the public about the historical significance of the work of Sir Frederick Banting;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Culture endorse Simcoe-Grey MPP Jim Wilson's private member's bill entitled the Frederick Banting Homestead Preservation Act so that the homestead is kept in good repair and preserved for generations to come."

I obviously agree with this petition, and I've signed it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the citizens of ward 3, Colchester South and ward 4, Harrow, Essex county, had no direct say in the creation of the new town of Essex; and

"Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation against the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people of Colchester South-Harrow; and

"Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of better services or reduced costs, and there is a total lack of harmony between residents of wards 1 and 2 and those of wards 3 and 4 with correspondingly different civic and social agendas; and

"Whereas the promise of tax decreases has not been met, with an average total increase of 35% since amalgamation, and the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Immediately rescind the amalgamation order, return our local municipal government in Colchester South-Harrow to the local citizenry and their democratically elected officials and in so doing provide for citizen-based, democratic decision-making and local municipal governance."

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to present a petition entitled "Bringing Health Card Renewal Services Closer to Glanbrook Residents." It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signatures of Margaret and Wray Daw, I affix my signature in support.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm pleased to present a petition that has to do with universal public health care systems in Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign it.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Highway 35 Four-Laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

I affix my signature to this and hand it to page Parker.

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly, entitled "Increase to the Number of Seats in the Federal Parliament." It reads:

"Whereas the government of Canada has proposed legislation to increase the number of seats in the federal Parliament, resulting from the recent data reflecting population growth; and

"Whereas, as has become the custom with Stephen Harper's government, Ontario again seems to be getting the short end of Confederation's stick; and

"Whereas this legislation discriminates against Ontario electors by making their vote count for less in the House of Commons, in comparison to electors from other parts of the country, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec; and

"Whereas there is apathetic concern for the challenges the sluggish US economy and the strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government's efforts in this regard; and

"Whereas this injustice hits at the very heart of democracy by creating a House of Commons where every single Canadian vote doesn't carry the same weight;

"We, the undersigned, formally request that in a nation where the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equality for all, such an injustice must not be allowed to prevail, and call upon the federal government to address this."

I agree with this, and affix my signature.

HEALTH CARD RENEWAL CLINIC

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have another petition to read into the record on behalf of Glanbrook residents interested in health card renewal of services. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas seniors, the disabled, families with young children and other Mount Hope and Binbrook residents are forced to drive to downtown Hamilton to renew their Ontario health cards; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario mandates that health cards be renewed on a regular basis and that an Ontario health card must be presented to receive OHIP health services; and

"Whereas the Dalton McGuinty government has increased taxes and fees on local residents but has not improved services;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work with the Ontario Ministry of Health to bring a mobile health card renewal clinic to the Mount Hope and Binbrook area so that residents can more readily renew their Ontario health cards without the drive to downtown Hamilton."

Beneath the signature of S. Bingham and J. McCready, of the St. Ann's and West Niagara areas, I affix my signature in support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Education has moved second reading of Bill 8, and I'm pleased to recognize the minister if she chooses to lead off the debate.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Right off the top, I'd like to just say that I am going to share my remarks with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Guelph, and I thank her for the work she has done on this legislation.

There are a few things as important as the health of our children and young people, and that's why the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, is extremely important. We, in the McGuinty government, take this issue very seriously.

Last week, I was at Bayview Middle School with the Premier. Bayview Middle School is a Toronto school that is working to create a healthier school environment for its students. Along with a number of other schools in the Toronto District School Board, Bayview has already begun reducing trans fat from the food sold in its cafeteria. The school cafeteria at Bayview has also been recognized by Eat Smart. I just want to acknowledge all the people who work in the cafeteria and in the school, especially Debbie, who works in the school cafeteria and makes the soup and makes sure that the kids have healthy options.

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Eat Smart is an award of excellence program that recognizes restaurants, school cafeterias, workplace cafeterias and recreation centres that meet standards of nutrition as well as food safety. I want to congratulate all of the schools, like Bayview, that have begun to limit trans fat in the diets of their students. Those schools have shown leadership and this government is showing leadership on moving on this issue in our schools.

I think all of us in this House know that obesity has become a serious health threat to children and adults across the province. In 2004, the Canadian Community Health Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, found that 28% of Ontarians aged two to 17 were either overweight or obese, and the levels of obesity among Canadian children aged seven to 13 have nearly tripled

over the last two decades. It's also estimated that 29% of teenagers aged 12 to 17 in Canada are either overweight or obese. Bien que ce problème soit très visible, souvent on n'y prête pas attention. This is a serious issue and it deserves our immediate attention.

We know there's a lot that families can do: there are guidelines that families can follow in terms of nutrition; we know that it's important for families to make sure their children get exercise. But there's a lot that government can do too, and this is one of the things we are moving on. The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools legislation is just one part of our comprehensive healthy schools strategy to help create healthier school environments for students to learn and grow.

Les enfants et les jeunes ont besoin d'une bonne alimentation, d'activités physiques et d'un environnement sain qui favorise l'apprentissage et l'épanouissement. These elements are vital to helping to maintain health and improve students' readiness to learn. The health of Ontario's youngest is something that should matter to absolutely all of us, and if we don't take action to fight against obesity now, our children will suffer from its effects in the future. It's very important that children establish habits at an early age that are good for their health going forward.

The facts are grim, I'm afraid. People who are obese are more likely to develop illnesses such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, stroke and hypertension. It also contributes to high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, breathing problems and joint pain. But it produces more than physical harm: Childhood obesity can have a negative effect on academic achievement and on social development. Children who are overweight may suffer from depression and self-esteem issues. It can also lead to discrimination on the playground, resulting in other psychosocial problems. We, as a government, are putting in place strategies to deal with some of the bullying issues that take place in the schoolyard, but the fact is that those interactions still take place. We have an opportunity to make positive change.

Bon nombre d'enfants et de jeunes n'ont pas un régime alimentaire équilibré ou adéquat sur le plan nutritif. For example, based on data from the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey, 59% of Canadian children and adolescents were reported to consume fruit and vegetables less than five times a day. These young people were significantly more likely to be overweight or obese than those who ate fruit and vegetables more regularly. They are instead, as we all know, eating foods that are high in calories but low in essential nutrients.

If we want our students to reach their full potential, we need to make sure that they are eating the right food and staying active. We've already introduced a number of programs and initiatives that are helping to promote healthy behaviours within our schools. Last year, we launched the Healthy Schools recognition program. Everyone in this House may have been in schools where they saw the plaques and the—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Banners.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—banners; thank you.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I've handed them out myself.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You handed them out yourself—the banners that are hanging in the front halls of our schools that recognize our Healthy Schools initiative. We launched that Healthy Schools recognition program, encouraging schools to take part in activities that promote healthy behaviours, and we challenged schools across the province to voluntarily undertake just one more thing, one more activity to make their schools healthier. Some schools that accepted the challenge took on not one but two or three initiatives that demonstrated that they were taking part in these healthy school activities. This is evidence of the enthusiasm that schools demonstrate when they look at the kinds of activities that their students can take part in.

The Ministry of Education also developed a broad framework for healthy schools in consultation with experts from the education and health sectors. That framework outlines components of a healthy school that can help schools develop healthy activities and programs for staff and students. As part of that framework, a healthy school has a number of features that include, for example, quality instruction and programs, a healthy physical environment, a supportive social environment and community partnerships. That's why the anti-bullying supports that we have put in our schools and the funding that we've put in place to allow schools to have anti-bullying initiatives are part of that healthy social environment. So this goes beyond the physical and takes in the social and psychological.

Within this very broad framework of a healthy school, a variety of health-related topics can be considered, such as healthy eating, physical activity, bullying prevention, personal safety and injury prevention, substance use and abuse, healthy growth and development and mental health. I know that many of the members in this House have been to schools in their own ridings where programs such as Walk to School Day—now, this might be something that is different in an urban setting than in a rural setting. In the urban settings, there is a lot of driving to school that goes on, and not just school buses. I know that in rural settings a lot of kids are required—they have to, because of the distances—to ride a school bus to school, and they need to get their physical activity in other ways.

In urban settings, in the past there has been the opportunity for kids to walk to school. That doesn't happen as much now as it did even 10 or 15 years ago. Many schools are reinstituting Walk to School Day or a walking school bus, where kids in the community walk together to school for safety reasons, and there's an acknowledgment at the school when kids have walked to school. So I know we're seeing those kinds of programs starting in our schools, and it's really important that we encourage those.

I'm sure that many of the members in this House have gone to schools when the daily physical activity is taking place and have taken part in the aerobic—I'm seeing the

member from Peterborough; he's done that. He has gone to schools in his riding and he takes part in the daily physical activity. It's important for us. We all have to stay healthy too.

So through the Healthy Schools recognition program, schools are recognized for addressing these areas. They adopt school-wide bullying prevention programs or they can partner with community sports groups to increase participation. All of these initiatives help to create a healthy and positive school environment that will enable students to reach their full potential.

I'm pleased to tell you that approximately 1,300 elementary and secondary schools participated in this program last year. Those schools identified more than 2,500 specific activities, and that is cumulative. That makes our system healthier. Schools that accepted the challenge received a recognition certificate and a banner to hang in their school. In addition, information about what they committed to is posted on the Ministry of Education's website so that schools can look at what other schools have done. Some of the activities included preparing healthy lunch menu suggestions for the cafeteria using student input.

I just want to acknowledge how very important it is in any of these activities that the students be involved. Kids have great ideas, and I think the very best programs in our schools are ones that tap into the ingenuity and the knowledge of our students. That's why I know that our Healthy Schools initiatives are going continue to be successful, including the removal of trans fats from menus in our school cafeterias. This is what students want. They want to be healthy and they know what it means to be healthy, so we can absolutely rely on kids to be part of the development of these healthy school initiatives.

Another activity: organizing Fit Fridays programs that provide students with opportunities to participate in fitness such as yoga or pilates during lunch on Friday. That's another aspect of this whole initiative. There's a whole range of healthy activities, if we're looking just at physical activity. It doesn't have to be the traditional sports activities that kids take part in. It can be a whole range of fitness activities that can last students throughout their lives, through to the years when they are, as I am, 54, and can't necessarily—

Interjections: No.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Fifty-four. It's sad but true. But it's not always possible to carry on with those traditional activities. So a full range of fitness activities is what we want to get kids interested in, such as creating a peace garden where classes can congregate to meditate, to conduct classes and to socialize outside—gardening is one of the very best activities that you can undertake for general overall wellness—or organizing a wellness week that includes opportunities for kids to take part in things like yoga and a variety of sports, those intramural programs.

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Schools across the province have demonstrated leadership. They've demonstrated a commitment to taking part

in the challenge and they've demonstrated creativity in the kinds of activities that make their schools healthier.

To provide schools with further resources, tips and tools are available online to parents, students and educators so that they can come up with ways for contributing to a healthy school community. What I have found is that these healthy school initiatives involve the whole community; it's not just the students, but it's the parents and all the community partners. So as well as encouraging healthy behaviours and practices, the program also, as I said, engages the community.

In order to accept the challenge, schools are required to work with the school council and student leaders. I'm very pleased that we're offering the Healthy Schools recognition program again this year, and I hope to see even more schools taking part. I know that we will. Schools will be sent information on how they can participate in the program, and then they can get more information on the Ministry of Education website.

En outre, nous avons introduit un certain nombre d'autres initiatives pour faire la promotion d'écoles saines. These include instructing school boards to implement 20 minutes of daily physical activity in elementary schools, and, as I've said, this is a very successful program. This step ensures that all elementary schools have a minimum of 20 minutes of sustained moderate to vigorous physical activity each school day during instructional time. That activity could be active games, dance, aquatics, sports, fitness, play, walking or other recreational activities. This gives kids the additional opportunity to become more active during the school day. We've supported this initiative not just with policy encouragement to the school boards, but we made an investment of \$12.7 million for training and resources because not every elementary school teacher was comfortable with providing that daily physical activity.

We've provided encouragement and have been working with the schools to make sure that teachers have the resources they need. In the Ministry of Education, we have developed resource guides for teachers, principals and school boards, as well as an e-learning module that includes video examples of activities that teachers can use.

We also—and this is a very important aspect of our Healthy Schools initiative—passed Sabrina's Law, which came into effect January 2006. This legislation requires that every school board have an anaphylaxis policy in place. These policies must include ongoing training for school staff on dealing with life-threatening allergies, creating individual plans for people who have anaphylactic allergies, and a plan to communicate information on life-threatening allergies to parents, pupils and staff. The Ministry of Education supported this by providing every school in the province and every public health unit with an anaphylaxis resource kit.

Mr. Dave Levac: Hear, hear.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is very, very important, and I want to recognize the member for Brant for his leadership on that initiative. We also, on that initiative,

developed an e-learning module for boards and schools so that they can have video demonstrations on how to administer medication.

Healthy eating and active living are also supported by the Ontario curriculum. The health and physical activity curriculum includes a strand on healthy living. The elementary and grade 10 curriculum focus on healthy living, which includes overall and specific expectations on the importance of healthy eating.

Nous avons aussi bénéficié d'une aide de la part d'autres ministères. The Ministry of Health Promotion introduced the northern fruit and vegetable pilot program last year, and this program currently delivers three weekly servings of fruits and vegetables to 12,000 students in the Algoma and Porcupine regions of northern Ontario. That is a terrific initiative.

The Ministry of Health Promotion's new EatRight Ontario telephone service enables teachers, parents and caregivers to have nutrition-related questions answered by a registered dietitian for free. It's very important that we have that information available to everyone in our community. We can't just assume that people know what the nutrition guidelines are and what the appropriate nutrition standards are. We have to have ongoing education of the community on that.

We're supporting the development and distribution of resources such as BusyBodies and Eat Right Be Active for parents and caregivers of young children. In addition, in February this government invested more than \$175,000 in programming aimed at improving intramural sport programs across schools. Intramurals are very important for students who may or may not be involved in varsity sports. They need to have an opportunity to get involved and develop their skills. Raise the Bar and similar programs give kids more opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity, regardless of their ability, so that they can lead healthy and active lives. These resources help instill healthy eating habits and encourage physical activity at an early age.

Lorsque les élèves sont actifs et consomment des aliments sains, ils ont plus de chances d'être éveillés et d'être prêts à apprendre.

The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, would complement all of our other initiatives, so we can reach every student in this province so that we can provide the healthiest environment possible for those students so they can reach their full potential and be fully participating citizens in the province of Ontario. That is our goal.

I would now like to ask my parliamentary assistant to speak about this legislation.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I am very pleased to rise in the House today for second reading of legislation that would help improve the health of students in our schools. Our government takes the health of our children and young people very seriously. When students are healthy, they have more energy for learning, and when they have that energy, they are better prepared to learn and be successful in our schools.

Because our children and young people spend such a significant amount of their time at school, it is important that they have healthy meal and snack choices available to them. Foods that are high in sugar, fat—including trans fat—and salt tend to be high in calories and can therefore have a significant impact on body weight. Yet students continue to consume these foods.

The Dietitians of Canada and the Dairy Farmers of Canada reported that the biggest challenge for school-age children to eat well at school is simply the availability of high-fat and sugary treats. This includes chips, chocolate bars and soft drinks. They also identified another related challenge: Students have limited access to nutritious foods because they are not available at school or the choices they bring from home are not the best. Yet our students do spend a large part of their time at school. That's why the proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, is so important.

If passed, this legislation would remove those higher-fat and sugary treats from vending machines. This would ensure that students have healthy options to reach for when they want a snack. The well-being of our children and youth depends on a healthy, active lifestyle. That's why, within our schools, we want to encourage the healthier food choices and more active lifestyles that the kids need to be successful.

We want to make sure that all students are healthy and able to concentrate on learning. Part of that means making sure that when students line up for lunch at the cafeteria, there are healthy food options available for them. Providing a healthy learning environment and encouraging students to make healthy lifestyle choices now will help them develop healthy habits for a lifetime. That's why we are proposing these amendments to the Education Act. We want to make sure there are healthy food choices available in the cafeteria, which do not contain high levels of trans fat, and we want to make sure that kids are reaching for healthy options, like milk and juice, in vending machines as well. It's important that our kids are eating healthy and nutritious foods.

The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, would help to introduce these healthy options. The proposed amendments would drop trans fat from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias. The proposed legislation would apply to food and beverages sold in school cafeterias and also to ingredients used in food and beverages prepared in school cafeterias.

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However, I want to be clear that if this legislation passes, an exemption would be made for dairy products and meat products like beef and lamb that contain small amounts of naturally occurring trans fat. There just simply isn't the evidence around the naturally occurring trans fats and their negative impact on health that we have from a multitude of researchers who have been looking at industrial trans fats, those that are artificially hydrogenated. So we're going to go with the scientific evidence and exempt natural dairy products and meat products.

Special-event days, such as pizza days, would also be exempted. We don't want to stop these special days at school and we know kids look forward to them, but we would encourage schools to select healthy options. There are many healthy and tasty options available. Contrary to some of the media around this, it is possible to have a trans-fat-free french fry. So the question is about how you prepare the foods, not simply that there will be blanket prohibitions on some of the foods that have been suggested.

Many companies, in fact, have already begun to remove or reduce trans fat in their products. This legislation would offer the food industry a business development opportunity to continue to create and market healthier options. By moving to drop trans fat from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias, we are encouraging students to make healthy food and beverage choices and helping them to reduce their intake of harmful trans fats.

In June 2006, the Trans Fat Task Force reported to the federal Minister of Health. In their report, they wrote that studies showed trans fat increased blood levels of bad cholesterol and decreased blood levels of good cholesterol. These combined effects are associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada estimates that consumption of processed trans fats may account for 30,000 to 50,000 heart attack deaths every decade in Canada. We don't want our kids to repeat that cycle. So if passed, this legislation would drop trans fats from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias. The health of our children and young people is precious, and we should act now to protect it. Providing healthier food options in schools and reducing the amount of trans fat that students consume can help reduce rates of childhood obesity as well.

That's why other jurisdictions are also taking action. In 2004, the Danish government banned the use of food oils containing more than 2% processed trans fats. That's one of the definitions; there are a few definitions that are used internationally and that's one. Danish authorities said that the regulations did not affect availability, price or quality of the foods affected, simply because the manufacturers co-operated with the ban and found new ways to produce the products that complied with the new rules.

In addition, a University of Minnesota study found that schools' lunch sales don't decline when healthier meals are served. It also found that nutritious lunches don't necessarily cost schools more to produce.

The proposal to ban trans fat has wide public support. The CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Rocco Rossi, recently said, "We are very pleased the government is joining us in our fight against trans fats. We look forward to working together to make our schools a healthier environment for our children."

We recognize that dropping trans fat is only one step to tackling childhood obesity. We would also remove unhealthy food and beverages in elementary and

secondary school vending machines. The proposed Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007, would build upon the voluntary ban on junk food in elementary school vending machines that we introduced back in 2004, and which the minister has already referred to.

These voluntary nutrition standards have already been widely accepted in elementary schools across the province. This proposed legislation would enhance those voluntary standards to keep unhealthy foods and beverages out of secondary school vending machines and, in fact, legislate it for all school vending machines.

The proposed changes would help us take a very important step towards protecting something that's so very important: the health of our children and young people. That's why I'm pleased that we are taking action so very quickly, because we would be addressing such an important issue. Giving our children healthier options while they are at school is simply a wise choice.

We are also going to examine options for establishing nutrition standards for school cafeterias, vending machines, tuck shops and canteens and other daily school food services in consultation with stakeholders. We know we will be needing to work with the stakeholders. The school boards, the schools, the contractors that provide various food services to schools, the people who are concerned about nutrition advice: We know we need to work with all of those, and we will be consulting with them about new regulations for nutrition standards over the next number of months.

The healthier menu choices that we would be outlining in those new regulations, however, would align with the new Canada's Food Guide. We know how important it is that young people start making healthy and balanced choices at an early age. Although there are other factors, poor diet and lack of physical exercise are the primary contributors to obesity. Both of these factors are things we can control by reaching for the healthier options and making sure we get the exercise we need.

Many parents may not be able to provide the balanced diet a child needs because they simply don't know what the Canada Food Guide's requirements are for nutritious meals. That's why our government must work together with communities and parents to make sure that we all understand what the rules are. I'm sure that once we have a healthier meal regime introduced into the schools, our students will become the disciples to go home and educate parents, as often happens with kids: The kids get it first and then they all educate the parents. So perhaps we may even end up with healthier adults. Wouldn't that be great?

However, we do know that poor eating habits in childhood are likely to be carried into adulthood and increase the risk of chronic diseases. If we tackle the issue of obesity now and instill in children the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, they will have greater health benefits later in life. Students who develop healthy habits now will be more likely to develop and maintain a healthy body weight through adulthood. That's why this proposed legislation is so important.

I'm pleased to see that our proposed legislation is receiving strong support from Ontario school boards. In Guelph—my hometown—for example, Bob Borden, chair of the Upper Grand District School Board, said, "There is a significant concern relative to the diet of our young people, and anything we can do to try and support healthy choices is good." He goes on to say that our board—that is, Upper Grand—"has been proactive over the last couple of years, in that they have been moving to eliminate vending machines that have a lot of junk food in them and food that is deep-fried, while trying to provide more healthy choice" for students.

Likewise, Don Drone, director of education for the Wellington Catholic District School Board, says his board fully supports our initiative. He believes, "It is really all about the good health of our young people and establishing good eating habits, which are going to be a lifelong investment."

I am proud to tell you that if this proposed legislation passes, Ontario will be among the first provinces in Canada to drop trans fats—

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's going to pass.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think it probably will pass; I'm very hopeful about that.

We expect to be among the first provinces in Canada to drop trans fats from foods and beverages sold in school cafeterias. We are showing true leadership in promoting student health and developing healthier schools.

This proposed legislation is just one part of our broader healthy schools strategy. We started with elementary school vending machines, we continued with daily phys ed and now we're going to address trans fat, secondary school vending machines and healthier menus—a good package for all our students.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Although the McGuinty government recognizes that child obesity is a problem that needs to be tackled, all this bill is really doing is adding provisions regulating the trans fat content in food and beverages in school cafeterias. It does not ban trans fat, it does not ban junk food; all it does is regulate it.

If we were really serious, we would do more. When all you do is take away the trans fat, it does not mean that you actually have healthy alternatives; you can still have a lot of junk food. Our school cafeterias are full of fatty and sugary foods, whether they have trans fat or not.

I was invited to speak at Confederation high school in my riding. After I spoke with the students, they invited me for lunch in their cafeteria, which I accepted. So I'm standing in line, and I ask all the students around me, "So, what's something good to pick from the cafeteria?" The answer was unanimous: They recommended I eat the poutine. I hope you all know what that is. It's french fries with cheese on top, drenched in gravy. My husband calls it "the high diving act of cholesterol fix." It's not a recommended delicacy or anything. Those types of choices are available in all of our schools.

Le gouvernement McGuinty voudrait nous faire croire que ce projet de loi va apporter de meilleurs choix et des choix santé dans nos écoles. Ils reconnaissent l'épidémie d'obésité chez nos enfants et nos adolescents, et ils reconnaissent que le gouvernement doit agir, mais ce qu'ils nous proposent, c'est un bien petit pas, et la route qui demeure est encore très longue.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's a pleasure to speak on this topic. As an educator for 25 years, I can tell you that 25 years ago I was advocating, as a specialist in phys ed, to add 20 minutes a day for fitness. This government did it. Isn't that nice? We've got that.

The second thing: I want to ask the member from Nickel Belt—I appreciate her comments, saying how serious an issue this is, and I do agree with her—why wasn't it in your platform? It wasn't in your platform. Is that right: It wasn't in your platform? If it wasn't, I'm sorry it wasn't; if it was, I stand corrected, and I'll apologize.

Having said that, I offer some of the good things that are happening. Let's look at what they're doing in the high schools. They've formed their own clubs—on their own—about healthy eating. So let's celebrate that. Let's say to them, “We're not going to prescribe; we're going to celebrate the fact that you're looking at good, healthy eating from now on.”

We also want to know this, in a simple way: Do the cafeterias want to feed kids unhealthy food? The short answer is, of course not; no, they don't. What have we learned in science over the decades? More and more, as we evolve, we're learning how to do these things better, and that's what we're proposing. We're just going to do it better. We're going to get better at doing this.

We know the statistics in this place, and I think in Ontario we know the statistics, about obesity and where we've led our kids. We're talking about leadership, so let's lead them out of the wilderness, and let's give them the opportunity to fix it themselves.

I know the families will be jumping on along with us because we all want healthy children. Nobody is going to sit back and say, “Let's not do this.” What they're going to say is, “Let's do it together.” So let's put our hand out with the schools, work with the groups, with the clubs, with the organizations and even the private sector, which is taking trans fats out of their foods—like Wendy's. Thanks very much. Let's move it forward.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add a few comments. I will get a chance a little later on to speak in more detail to this bill, but I just wanted to get on the record that the PC Party will be supporting Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, although—

Applause.

Mr. Norm Miller: Don't applaud too quickly here. We'll certainly be critical of your approach because, from my perspective, this bill is more about show than anything else, as we sit here in the Legislature.

I would also like to point out that I have been on the record in 2006 supporting some of the actions of the Making the Grade program, and we of course had the

Bracebridge and Muskoka Lake Secondary School nutrition action committee that wrote to me in 2006. So I did get their letter on the record supporting greater nutrition.

But certainly it is our feeling on this side of the Legislature that this is really more about show. It's one very specific minor detail. You should be taking a more comprehensive program or approach to dealing with obesity. You should certainly be encouraging more lifestyle changes in terms of a lot more exercise and generally better eating habits in society; but this is one very small part.

I might add, in this session of the Legislature, this fall session, we have been sitting for some three weeks, in two of which it seems that the main thing we do is go to receptions. This is about the only bill we've talked about in this whole session of the Legislature, so it's been a stretch. This new agenda of the new government—to meet for about an hour and then go to receptions seems to be the new approach in this new McGuinty government.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to say to the citizens that it's 4:15 p.m. at this time. I will be speaking in approximately an hour and 10 minutes for those of you who are interested in my lead on this bill. I just alert those of you who are having a glass of wine and some popcorn and some other fatty food: Just tune in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members now has two minutes to reply, if you choose to do so.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members of Nickel Belt, Brant, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Trinity–Spadina for their comments on the bill.

The member from Nickel Belt described the problem very well. In fact—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Very good.

In fact, if you go into some school cafeterias—not all, but some school cafeterias—what you find is that the food choices that are currently available are not very healthy. You can go into other school cafeterias and find in fact that the schools are already doing a very conscientious effort of trying to provide students with a balanced choice, a healthy range of foods that are available. What we want to make sure is that it isn't just hit-and-miss, depending on the staff at a particular school or the food contractor at a particular school to make sure that the healthy menu is available.

If you look at the bill, in fact, there are three parts. The first part bans trans fats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It doesn't say that.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: What it says is that the schools must meet the rules laid out in regulations around the restrictions on trans fats. The reason for that is that we want to make sure that we can comply with the Canadian federal definition of trans fat. As research unfolds, those definitions of what minute part of trans fat can be allowed vary from year to year, over time, with the federal government. We want to make sure that we can comply forever and not have to come back—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

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Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to participate in this debate. It's clear that we're in a new session of Parliament. We have a new Lieutenant Governor, we have a new Speaker, but it's very clear we have the same Premier and the same Minister of Education because we're back to the same old spin over substance when it comes to legislation in this House. The Minister of Education is again leading the charge for the government to conduct the photo ops and to speak the rhetoric of government that attracts a headline but is very, very shallow in terms of content.

In my response to the minister's statement when she tabled this legislation, I stated clearly that I would support the legislation, and I speak today on behalf of our caucus as well, who have confirmed their support for the legislation. But it's our responsibility as the official opposition to point out to the public, to the taxpayers, to those who observe the proceedings in this House, the emptiness of this legislation, and I intend to do that along with my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, with whom I will be sharing my time.

I want to first of all pay tribute to a young lady who was involved in drafting legislation that deals with the issue of nutrition in schools and school cafeterias. Her name is Nupur Dogra. You'll recall from the last session of the Legislature the CBC program spearheaded by Mike Wise. The program was called Making the Grade. Maybe some of the pages will remember that program. It's an initiative that involved grade 9 students. The program invited students from across the province to participate in the development of legislation. I had the opportunity to sponsor one of those bills spearheaded by Nupur Dogra, who, as I indicated, was a grade 9 student at Iroquois Ridge High School in Oakville. Speaker, you will recall that we dedicated a very special session of the Legislature to debating not only that bill but two other bills under that program.

The reason I mention that bill is that I pulled that bill down from Hansard, I reviewed the construct of that bill, and when I compare it to the legislation that the Minister of Education has brought forward to the House as government legislation, the weight of the bill prepared by those students is significant compared to the legislation that's being presented by this government today. The content is more far-reaching, and the end result of that legislation prepared by the students will have a much more far-reaching impact on the health of the students in this province than the current government bill ever will.

So I invite the minister to listen carefully to what I have to say, and perhaps she will consider, when this bill goes to committee, accepting the official opposition's recommendations for amendments, which will in fact incorporate many of the recommendations made by the students' bill, into the government bill so that we actually have a substantive piece of legislation to achieve the objectives that are set out in this legislation.

To that end, I'd like to, for the benefit of viewers and for the benefit of those Liberal backbenchers who have not read the legislation—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And us.

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, the third party always reads the legislation. I very seldom agree with them, but what I do respect about the third party is that they are conscientious, they do their homework and they know what they stand for.

Here's what the explanatory note of this legislation states: "The bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria. The Minister may make regulations exempting"—the very next sentence—"from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products." It goes on to say—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We're not banning lamb or beef.

Mr. Frank Klees: No, I understand. I'll get to that.

"The bill also adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in regulations. Power is given to the Minister of Education to create policies, guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity."

Now, I would like to just set out in contrast to that preamble, that explanatory note of the government legislation, and read into the record the content of the bill that was proposed by Nupur Dogra that I referred to earlier. This is the student's bill that was proposed, and here are those amendments that were proposed. First of all, this was the amendment to subsection 170(1) of the Education Act. That amendment reads as follows: "7.3 Require every pupil in every school year who attends a school under the jurisdiction of the board to receive instruction that the board provides on nutrition standards that it considers necessary for healthy eating, which shall include instruction on Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and Canada's Guidelines for Healthy Eating, both published by Health Canada as they are amended from time to time."

That's substantive, and it goes to what we believe should be taking place. There is no reference in the government legislation that speaks at all to the issue of requiring education of our students, so that they can, in fact, make an informed decision, an informed choice about the foods that they eat.

The next section of Ms. Dogra's bill reads as follows: "7.4 Establish a committee composed of the persons that the board appoints to advise the board on what nutrition standards should form part of the subject matter of the instruction described in paragraph 7.3." Again, very common sense. Let's get people together from the local school, within that local board, make a decision about what it is that those students should have by way of education and instruction, have the local input and let the

local school councils have their input in terms of how best to communicate that.

The third section of that bill reads as follows: “7.5 If the board operates a cafeteria in a school under its jurisdiction for the use of the staff and the pupils under paragraph 37 of subsection 171(1), post a copy in the cafeteria of Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating and Canada’s Guidelines for Healthy Eating, both published by Health Canada as they are amended from time to time.” Once again, very practical, informational. Allow students to see the information, give them instruction, and remind them how important it is to make healthy decisions about the food they eat and how they conduct their lives.

In contrast, we have in the legislation before us essentially a request from the minister to have the authority of this Legislature to allow her to study the matter, to create yet additional bureaucracy, to create more red tape, to create more regulation. At the end of the day, essentially what the minister is trying to do is to catch up to what she full well knows most school boards in the province are in fact already doing.

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Let me just, by way of example, point out that the York Region District School Board is one of those boards, and I’m sure not the only one, that in fact has a board policy—I have a copy of board policy 135 here. I’d like to, for the benefit of the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant, who shakes her head, “No, that’s not the case”—well, let me advise her that it is the case. I’m certain that the York board is not the only board that has taken this initiative. Here is what I would like to do—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, if you could bring the parliamentary assistant to order so that we can get on with the debate, I’d appreciate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask all the members of the House to come to order and allow the member to make his presentation.

I return to the member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: As I was saying, I’d like to first of all commend the York Region District School Board for their responsible actions on this issue. I’d like to read into the record their board policy statement 135. It reads as follows:

“It is the policy of the York Region District School Board to permit food and vending services for students which follow Canada’s Food Guide in order to encourage healthful choices for students and staff. This policy is also in accordance with the provincial government’s policy/program memorandum 135, healthy foods and beverages in elementary school vending machines.”

The school board in York region has embraced the need, obviously, to ensure that students under its responsibility have healthy choices.

The policy goes on to indicate several responsibilities of the board: that is, to ensure that the principals are fully aware of the policy, that the plant services are respon-

sible for certain aspects of implementing the policy. And it defines healthful choices for the students. It refers to the fact that not only is it a policy, but they want to ensure that it is implemented throughout the entire school board.

I also have here a copy of a letter that was sent to the school partners of Aramark Corp. This is the private sector firm that is providing food services to the York region board and many others across not only this province but across the country and throughout North America. Here is what this memorandum states very clearly. It states that through the holistic nutrition program of Aramark, there is a corporate commitment to create more healthy nutrition environments, stating that they are working diligently to provide students and school communities with balanced, healthy choices.

I’m going to quote from the memorandum, because I think it’s important for members as well as the public to understand that there is, in fact, a broad recognition of the importance of addressing this issue, and that in many ways, as I said before, the private sector is way ahead of this government. Let me read to you from this memorandum that was sent to the school board by Aramark. It reads as follows:

“Aramark continues to be actively involved in shaping nutrition initiatives and programs across the province and country, participating on the Eat Smart advisory committee and partnering with regional public health units, school communities and our food suppliers. Moving forward, we’re excited to build on the success of our FUEL program that provides students and staff with well-balanced menu options and supports educational initiatives around healthy lifestyles and the centrality of food in our daily lives.

“Aramark is also committed to reduce and eliminate artificial trans fats used in all of our food service operations across North America and throughout our school food service operations. We are working to meet and exceed the recommendations made by the Canadian Trans Fat Task Force in June 2006, supported by Health Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation and endorsed by the Minister of Health in June 2007.” And I might add that is not the Minister of Health for Ontario, it is the Minister of Health for the federal government.

My point is very simply this: The legislation that we’re debating today is really not much more than a photo op on the part of this government to say, “Me too; us too,” because the world is quickly passing them by. What is needed is not legislation to allow the minister to create more regulation and to be seen to be doing something. What the Minister of Education and this government need to do is to give the province of Ontario a comprehensive strategy to deal with the health and wellness of our students, of our young people. And that is much more than creating a regulation around trans fats, because most of the world is already there.

Quite frankly, what we would want to see and what I would have expected the Minister of Education to do is to bring in to this House a resolution that would call on

the federal government to deal with this trans fat issue as a national issue, and do what has been done in other jurisdictions and in other countries such as Denmark, where the national government of that country took this issue on because it recognized the importance to the health of its population and in fact implemented regulation that banned trans fats above a certain level—I believe they used 2%—to the point where now across that country there is no such thing in any of its food as unhealthy trans fat levels. That's what we should be doing, not one-off pieces of legislation that take hours and hours of this Legislature's time to talk about an issue that, quite frankly, is redundant. What we should be doing is calling on the federal government to take that national strategy.

In addition to that, here's what we should be doing here. We should be developing a provincial strategy that deals with the health and wellness of our children, that incorporates not only the foods that they eat but also deals with issues such as diabetes, which is a serious problem, that deals with the consequences of the unhealthy lifestyles that we have allowed our children to become accustomed to.

I want to thank Helen Poon, who is a constituent. She is the community mission specialist with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. She wrote to me this past Monday on this issue. She encouraged the Legislature to move forward with this legislation, but also spoke to the issue of a broader strategy and how important that is. I received subsequently, after speaking with her, information from the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I want to commend the Heart and Stroke Foundation for the good work that they have done, the extensive research that they have done on this issue. There is a report, and I trust that the minister will take advantage of that work. I trust that the government of Ontario will support the work of the Heart and Stroke Foundation to ensure that all of this research that has been done will be incorporated into the work that the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health undertake with regard to this issue.

1640

I want to read into the record some statements from the Heart and Stroke Foundation for the benefit of my colleagues and the public. Here are some of the facts that the Heart and Stroke Foundation want us to know about:

“Lowering trans fat and saturated fat in your diet will help reduce your risk for heart disease and stroke,” but

“Simply lowering or eliminating trans fat in packaged food will not necessarily make the food we eat more nutritious. You should also be aware of the salt and sugar content of foods and the overall number of calories.” That, again, is to the issue of vending machines. To be seen to be eliminating trans fats and to make that pronouncement without addressing these other aspects of what that food is like that is in those vending machines is doing only half the job.

“Risk factors you can control,” such as “smoking, physical inactivity, high blood pressure, high blood

cholesterol, obesity and diabetes” are the issues that we as individuals have control over and that we should be helping others to deal with as we approach this debate.

What I would like to propose to the government is that, in addition to dealing with these regulations, which the government will, in fact, deal with—and we will be supportive, but, as I say, we will also be providing some amendments that we trust the government will consider as we move forward. What is important is the issue of physical activity for students. Again, the government has come a very small step, to say that they require 20 minutes of physical activity. I don't think they've gone far enough, because what the government should also do is ensure that the resources are there, that the physical spaces are there for our students to actually participate in meaningful physical activity.

How many of our schools today do not have an appropriate gymnasium, do not have the appropriate facilities where an adequate physical activity program can take place? That is because this government, over the last number of years, has refused to listen to school boards as they've appealed to this government, time and time again, to address the funding formula that is resulting in school infrastructure throughout this province crumbling.

I have visited them, Speaker, and I'm sure you have as well, where gymnasiums, instead of being used for the activity for which they were designed, are packed during lunch hour with students having their lunches. Instead of having physical activity, students are packing gymnasiums to have lunch. Why? Because this government has failed those schools, has failed to address the issue of physical infrastructure needs throughout this province. We call on the government not to put off for another four years reviewing the funding formula, but to do that now. Our schools are in desperate need of having that funding formula addressed.

The other aspect of this issue—

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: —and I hear Mr. Levac—what I want to do next is refer to a piece of legislation that was practical, that was brought into this House not by the government but by a private member who saw the issue that he brought a solution to, through his Bill 3. It was a response on the part of the government to a private member who came forward and said, “Look, let's be practical. Here is a solution.” I'm simply saying: Let's have this government listen once again to individual members of this House when we appeal to the government to go beyond simply bringing in empty frameworks of legislation and be specific. If we all agree, and I believe we all do, that the issue of obesity and the issue of health for our young people is ultimately responsible—if we agree on that broad, common ground—then why can we not also agree in terms of the solution to dealing with that? Let's ensure that we do have a proper strategy, a long-term strategy that addresses the issues of health, physical activity and the physical wellness of our students.

I want to allow some time to my colleague, who is going to bring his own perspective to this issue. But I

will wrap up my remarks by simply saying that we look forward to the committee hearings. I've stated clearly that we want to support the intent of this legislation. We're highly disappointed with the emptiness, with the fact that there's really not much more here than rhetoric on the part of the government. We'll be watching very, very carefully—I'm sure the public will as well—how receptive the government is to moving forward with substantive steps to ensure that we implement the kinds of policies and regulations that will be necessary to make a difference in the lives of students across this province, not only today but for generations to come.

Mr. Norm Miller: Certainly, the member from Newmarket–Aurora did an excellent job of pointing out how we support this bill but that it's just one, tiny aspect of improving the health of our children; what is needed is a complete strategy.

Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act—it's a pretty tiny bill—"amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria." As I said a little earlier in the couple minutes when I had a chance to speak, in this session of the Legislature—we've been here three weeks—this is really about the first bill that's been debated. Most days, we've been here until about four in the afternoon and then it's off to three or four receptions. I find it quite surprising that this government, having just won a majority, wouldn't have some initiatives they'd like to accomplish, versus this bill, which I say is more about show than anything else, although we certainly support trying to make our children more healthy.

This bill bans trans fat. What is trans fat? Well, from Wikipedia, trans fat is "the common name for a type of unsaturated fat with trans isomer fatty acids. Trans fats may be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated." Unlike other dietary fats, trans fats are neither required nor beneficial for health. Eating trans fats increases the risk of coronary heart disease. Trans fat raises your bad, LDL, cholesterol and lowers your good, HDL, cholesterol. Health authorities worldwide recommend that consumption of trans fat be reduced to trace amounts. Trans fats from partially hydrogenated oils are generally considered to be more of a health risk than naturally occurring oils.

I think we're in agreement, and it sounds like world-wide agreement, that trans fats are generally bad and we shouldn't be eating that many of them. But what I would say is, why are we dealing with this in one, tiny provincial bill that just affects school-age kids? If they're bad for school-age kids, they're probably bad for all of us. So I would suggest that the more appropriate place to deal with this would be to set national standards across the country and deal with it that way.

Canada is one of the largest consumers of trans fats in the world. Since December 2005, Health Canada has required that food labels list the amount of trans fats in the nutrition facts section, so that's a bit of an improvement. But in June 2006, a task force co-chaired by Health Canada and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Can-

ada—the member from Newmarket–Aurora referenced the Heart and Stroke Foundation—recommended a limit of 5% trans fats of the total fat in all products sold to consumers in Canada. The amount was selected such that most of the industrially produced trans fats would be removed from the Canadian diet, and about half of the remaining trans fats would be naturally occurring trans fats.

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This recommendation has been endorsed by the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, and Food and Consumer Products of Canada has congratulated the task force on the report, although it did not recommend delaying implementation until 2010. Ten months after submitting their report, the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and Toronto Public Health issued a plea to the government of Canada to act immediately on the task force's recommendations and to eliminate harmful trans fats from Canada's food supply. In fact, on June 20, 2007, the federal government announced its intention to regulate trans fats to the June 2006 standard unless the food industry voluntarily complied with these limits within two years.

My point is that this is a national problem; it doesn't just affect kids, although of course we want to protect our kids, and it should be dealt with on a national level so that everyone in this wonderful country of Canada benefits from consuming less trans fats, versus what we're doing here; I think it's more about show. It's about the only bill being debated in this fall session of the Legislature. This government is so much about optics and show, and this bill simply demonstrates that. What have we done in this session of the Legislature? How much did it cost to bring the Legislature back for these three weeks? We elected a Speaker, we've had a speech from the throne, we passed one bill unanimously in all of about 10 minutes to do with OHIP coverage for military personnel returning to Canada, and I think this is the latest the House has sat; it's 4:50 p.m. Most days we've been out of here at 4 o'clock and on to another of three or four receptions.

There doesn't seem to be much pressing business that this newly elected government wants to accomplish. If we're going to be dealing with education issues, I have plenty of them that need to be dealt with in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, but certainly issues that affect all of northern and rural Ontario.

This government has said in the past that they were going to fix the funding formula that was brought up by the member from Newmarket–Aurora as well. It seems like they may have made some changes, and that's what the minister said today in the Legislature, but they certainly have not fixed that. They had a whole ream of newspaper articles particularly from the Parry Sound area, all fairly recent, from the spring right through to quite recently, outlining how the funding formula certainly is not working with the Near North District School Board. I note that in a recent edition of the Beacon Star they're talking about the fact that municipal politicians

are stepping up to assist the local schools because of the problems that are occurring.

I'll quote from the Beacon Star:

"The problems facing Near North District School Board trustees and administrators are faced by school boards throughout northern Ontario because a funding formula made in Toronto can't be applied to rural communities. The formula is based on the fact schools have a minimum of 350 students. In the north, that just doesn't work. The Near North District School Board, with schools from North Bay to MacTier, has two schools with barely 350 children. Any attempt to have 350 kids in every building would mean children travel for hours on buses—which would wreak havoc on their social lives and overall well-being. It would also wreak havoc on the social structure and economic strength of every small town....

"Here's hoping they, and the school board trustees, make this week's meeting a catalyst for change. Here's hoping they can be the first group to awaken the deaf ears of Toronto bureaucrats and politicians who ignore the plight of rural schools." I would say that is referring to the current government. "Here's hoping they are the small spark that would ignite a northern political effort Queen's Park can't afford to ignore.

"We'll cheer them every step of the way."

That is a fairly recent editorial in the Beacon Star from Parry Sound.

Certainly, the Near North District School Board is facing some significant challenges because that funding formula hasn't been fixed. Every week there's another article in the Parry Sound newspapers about having to deal with possible school closures. At a recent district of Parry Sound municipal association meeting—that's where all the municipalities of Parry Sound get together and talk about important issues—in October, they passed a resolution to do with the Near North District School Board. I won't read the whole resolution, but they said, in conclusion, "Therefore may it be resolved that the Near North Board of Education work toward the future with the interests of maintaining the integrity of the municipalities by developing and implementing a strategic plan and that the municipalities are made aware of the plan and its progress, so that a greater degree of efficient coordination among parties is possible." They're passing that because obviously education is a big concern in rural areas of, certainly, Parry Sound–Muskoka, but I would say it's safe to say in all of northern Ontario, all of rural Ontario.

As I say, every week there's another article in the local papers. Here's the Beacon Star from December 7, about the second meeting the municipal leaders have had:

"Area municipal leaders reiterated their plans to help lobby on behalf of schools Wednesday....

"During the meeting Tom Shultz, the board's superintendent of business and finance, outlined the Near North's budget, highlighting financial woes in two areas:

"—the need for money to repair or replace aging buildings—about \$120 million according to the province's 2002 estimates, and;

"—annual funding shortfalls in operating expenses, with the board paying more for staff salaries and benefits, support staff, full-time kindergarten, school offices and building maintenance than it receives from the province."

So the province isn't giving enough money to the board to cover the costs.

"One of the biggest losses the board faces each year comes from teachers' salaries, Mr. Shultz said. On average, the board pays about \$71,639 per elementary teacher and receives about \$70,471 from the province. The board also spends about \$9,163 per elementary teacher in benefits, and receives \$7,137 per teacher from the province—a total funding difference of about \$3,194 per teacher. With similar shortfalls for secondary teachers, the board faced a loss of more than \$825,000 this year. Boards across the province face the same shortfall for salaries, Mr. Shultz said."

Obviously the province has negotiated salaries and then hasn't funded them properly, so the boards are facing some real pressures.

We're talking about this trans fat bill that I've said should be dealt with at a national level, but in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, we have schools that are in real need of repair. We have the Parry Sound High School, which had a lot of work done to it last year. It's an old school, and I would say the Parry Sound community needs a new high school. It's the only high school for miles around. We have the Huntsville High School. Huntsville is a growing community. That's another situation where it's an old school and it needs to be upgraded. But this government is not funding the school boards—that covers Near North District School Board and Trillium Lakelands District School Board—sufficiently so they can make the necessary improvements to those schools.

When I was in the election at the Parry Sound High School, one of the questions the students asked me was, "When are we going to get our new school?" So I would ask the government, "When is Parry Sound going to get a new school?" They've got a crumbling school, it's in need of repair, and this government instead is talking about something they think is going to look good in the newspapers: trans fats.

In the recent budget passed by the Near North District School Board, we're seeing significant cutbacks. Here we are again, in the Beacon Star:

"The Near North District School Board will lose about 34 educational assistants and several teachers, but hang on to all-day kindergarten in a budget passed late Wednesday night.

"Cuts include about \$2.2 million in special education, most of it staff, including the educational assistants and some special education teachers. The move still leaves the board absorbing \$876,000 in special education costs not directly funded by the province."

So the province isn't even funding the special education needs in the Near North District School Board. They're having to dip into their own budget to the tune of \$876,000 and use up all their reserves and run a deficit.

So we have the extraordinary situation where all the municipalities are getting together and having meetings to try to drum up support and raise awareness for the terrific need of the schools in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

1700

I would say to the government, it's great that we're talking about trans fats. We support eliminating trans fats. We support having a more comprehensive plan versus this one-off, very small bill in which we're talking about just banning trans fats in schools. As I say, I made it very clear that I think this should be dealt with on a national level across the country so that not only the kids in our schools but all of us benefit. We support, and I certainly support, encouraging healthier lifestyles, encouraging more exercise, but there are some significant problems in our schools that this government should be dealing with and that it currently is not dealing with, particularly the funding formula as it relates to rural and northern schools.

So I'm pleased to have had the opportunity today to add some comments to this Bill 8. We will be supporting it.

I know the member from Newmarket–Aurora made mention of the Making the Grade program. I would like to note that in the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka we have a proactive nutrition action committee at the Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. They wrote to me in 2006 supporting the private member's bill put forward by Nupur Dogra in the Making the Grade program. They wrote:

"To Norm Miller:

"We are writing to encourage your support of Bill 93, the Education Amendment Act (Nutrition Standards in Schools), 2006. The Bracebridge–Muskoka Lakes school nutrition action committee ... applauds Nupur Dogra for taking this initiative and introducing this bill" to the Legislature.

"It is time to address the poor eating habits of Ontario children and youth. Overweight in young people due to poor nutrition and lack of physical activity is identified as one of the greatest health challenges and risk factor for chronic disease—one that may soon overtake tobacco as the leading cause of preventable death and disease.

"Our committee is comprised of teachers, school administrators, school board trustees, food service staff, parents, students and public health staff. We joined together to address a common concern in our school ... the overwhelming accessibility of unhealthy food choices available all day long in schools for students and staff.

"Our committee in conjunction with our food service company Aramark—that company was mentioned by the member for Newmarket–Aurora—"is working to make healthy food choices more available, more affordable and more visible in our cafeteria and vending options. We have made great strides during this school year but we need the help of Bill 93 to make nutrition standards compulsory and consistent in schools as well as increase the student knowledge on healthy eating.

"We invite you to visit our school cafeteria to see firsthand what we have been doing to make changes to the food choices and what obstacles are still in our way."

That was sent by Steve Kinnear, teacher and chair of the BMLSS—Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School—nutrition action committee, and I certainly support it.

One of the problems in dealing with trans fats only in this bill and not across the country in broader ways—I think of Gravenhurst, where also in the election I was at a favourite downtown restaurant once in the midst of the election campaign, having lunch there. It was very busy, so I was at the front counter. There was a steady procession of high school students coming into this restaurant to buy their favourite lunchtime meal, which was poutine. Hopefully it didn't have trans fats in it, but I suspect it wasn't the healthiest choice they might make. I'm sure they like it. I like poutine the odd time myself. But the point I'm making is this: You can ban trans fats in schools, and that's a good thing, but the students can still walk outside of the school and go down to their local restaurant and have a meal that's full of trans fats. So you still aren't necessarily having as much benefit across society as you might otherwise if you took a broader approach to this.

Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up now and thank you for the opportunity to have a chance to speak to this Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: This Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act sure has a big title and would lead us to believe that we are about to do some great things. We all recognize that our kids have to eat better food, that the obesity epidemic is upon our youth and children and something has to be done. With a title like this, wouldn't we all rally and say, "Hey, we're doing the right thing"? But as soon as you start to read it, as soon as you do your homework, you realize that this bill is not banning trans fat, this bill is not banning junk food. All it says is that we now have the power to set levels in regulation. This is a far cry from what we actually need. We need to take concrete action.

When you talk to nutritionists—and certainly Madame Suzanne Primeau-Raymond from my riding is a nutritionist who talks to kids about healthy food choices all the time—banning trans fat is something very important. It is so important that the federal government has already passed a law that makes manufacturers publish the amount of trans fat in each and every one of their foods and it has to be less than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving in order to be labelled trans-fat free. So those regulations are already there. People are already making healthy food choices when it comes to trans fat.

We have to bring it a step forward. We have to look at all of the fat content in the food that's served in our schools. We have to look at the sugar content of the food that is served, the calories, the salt. There are a lot of healthy choices out there, but by banning trans fat, you are so limited that you can ban all the trans fat and still

serve poutine and still serve potato chips and still have candy bars that are trans-fat free. But that does not mean that you're serving healthy food, that does not mean that you have healthy food for healthy schools, which the act would lead us to believe.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members for Newmarket and Parry Sound-Muskoka for their comments on the bill.

I must agree with one thing the member for Newmarket-Aurora said, which is now that we're back we seem to be at the same old, same old. In fact, we're back to that same old performance, that when the members of the official opposition actually rather agree with what we're doing, they try to convince the public that we're not really doing anything. In fact—

Interjection: Same old, same old.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Same old, same old from Mr. Klees.

However, what we are doing here is banning trans fat and the definition will be the federal definition of trans-fat free. We are banning junk foods by legislation in both elementary and secondary school vending machines, and we are going to work with stakeholders and develop regulations that will give us a broader set of nutritional guidelines.

It's interesting that the two Conservative members—one said all boards are doing this and read out a policy; another read out a letter that showed in fact all boards aren't doing it and we need these regulations. So we're going to bring some consistency to this.

I'd like to also share that, in fact, we have met with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. We do have their report. We have invited them to participate with us in the stakeholder group that will be developing the broader recommendations and the broader regulations. So we are fully engaged with that group on broader nutritional guidelines.

Yes, it would be wonderful if we had a federal response, but unfortunately the federal response to the Trans Fat Task Force was to come up with a federal definition of trans-free, and then to decide maybe we'll legislate later—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I listened with interest to the two members discussing Bill 8, this proposed legislation to ban trans fats in school cafeterias. As the member for Newmarket-Aurora indicated, this is hardly a comprehensive approach. It's just a one-off, knockoff piece of legislation, hardly a shotgun approach. To use the Legislative Assembly and its committee process to focus on such a narrow issue, to me, is like using a sledgehammer to drive a tack, hardly a comprehensive health—let alone health promotion—strategy.

1710

I give credit to Voortman cookies. The private sector obviously does have a role to play. This bandwagon's been rolling, to my mind, for 12 years. Voortman cookies announced that it would rid its products of trans fat. I

also see that New York City's board of health has approved a ban on trans fats in all restaurants across the city, not limiting it to elementary students or secondary students. There are many of us who have graduated from school—I think most of us here have graduated from school—and we should be getting a bit of help from our Ontario government.

So the target here, rightfully so but not comprehensively enough, would be doughnuts, pastries, cookies, crackers, muffins, croissants, all snack foods, fried foods, French fries, breaded foods. There's quite a list here. These foods have something in common: The trans fat content of these foods may be as high as 45%.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina in this time of generosity for giving up his two minutes so I can speak.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's the holiday season.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you for your holiday good cheer.

I just want to say that yesterday morning I had the pleasure of bringing the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Deb Matthews, to a school in my riding, Flemington Public School. She saw first-hand how children in a high-need Toronto area—it's one of the 13 designated high-need areas—are benefiting from having better nutrition in our schools. In fact, in that school they have a servery in a kitchen and the children, for \$1 a week, can get free breakfast, and their siblings can also get breakfast. For \$2 they can get lunch that's provided.

The kitchen staff and the nutritionist in the school are very concerned about the children having good food on a regular basis because, ironically enough, next door to Flemington Public School is the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre. Do you know what they've had to establish in the Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre over the last year? They've had to establish a diabetes clinic. As many of you know, type 2 diabetes is a disease, a sickness, that has reached epidemic proportions in Canada and in Ontario. So when we talk about healthy foods and trans fats and physical education for our children, this is serious business for parents, serious business for our health care system, and it's very serious for children who want to know what foods are good for them and what are not.

So this is a very meaningful initiative that means a lot to children and means a lot to families, parents and teachers. That's why I applaud Minister Wynne for taking this initiative. Our children deserve this kind of protection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde): Questions and comments? Two-minute response.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to thank the members for their comments, especially my colleague from Muskoka for his insight.

For the benefit of the government—although they say they have this report, it's very clear they haven't read it—I would like to read into the record from the Trans Fat Task Force report with regard to the Danish experience:

"In 2003, in response to recommendations from the Danish Nutrition Council, the Danish government prohibited the use in foods of oils containing more than 2% of industrially produced trans fat by 2004. Recent analyses of foods that have traditionally been significant sources of industrially produced trans fats clearly demonstrate that these trans fats have been virtually eliminated from foods in Denmark. As well, the analyses showed that international fast food chains, while continuing to sell foods with high levels of industrially produced trans fats in other countries, had reduced the amount of these trans fats in foods sold in Denmark."

The reason I want to share that with the government is that it points out the difference between a government that wants to comprehensively tackle an issue, take action on it and get the job done, and this government, which continues to pick around the edges, drops one-off pieces of legislation in this House and then runs out the door with their photo ops and claims to have done something when in fact they have done nothing.

Our job is to expose this government for its shallowness, and I say to the parliamentary assistant that it is a very easy job to point out to the people of this province how little you really do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. We're on live, and it's 5:15. I hope people have their wine and beer and popcorn and chocolate bars and potato chips, to enjoy the debate in this place.

I went to Bayview Middle School last week when the minister, the Premier and the local member were there, presumably to congratulate the Premier and the minister on what they were about to announce. I have to admit that I was looking forward to some big announcement, because when you have the Premier coming to make the announcement, you think it's really important. It's got to be. Why else would the Premier come? So I said to myself, "It's got to be a big announcement"—healthy food for healthy schools. I said to myself that it had to be something that would attract my attention, that would be riveting, that would be of the utmost significance; otherwise, the Premier would just leave it to the minister to announce. And so I waited.

Lo and behold, we go to the cafeteria; we go to the gymnasium, where the Premier takes a photo with the students—it was really very nice; and then we head off to the school library and wait for the announcement. I heard the Premier say, "We're getting rid of trans fats," and I assumed they were getting rid of trans fats at the elementary and secondary levels. But the Premier said, "No, we're not doing that. We're only getting rid of trans fats at the elementary level."

Immediately, a staff person comes, as I'm doing media interviews, and says, "No, no, no, you've got it all wrong. We're getting rid of trans fats at both the elementary and the secondary levels," and I reminded the young woman that the Premier didn't say that. She said,

"He did," and I said, "No, he didn't," and we went back and forth in that vein for a couple of seconds. But she clearly heard what I heard, and everyone around me was startled, befuddled about this great announcement about banning trans fats at the elementary level and not at the secondary level. So we thought this was a curious announcement. It is so picayune that I thought I shouldn't be there.

He went on to say, "We're getting rid of junk food in our schools," and I thought, "Okay," until a journalist asked, "Well, what are you really getting rid of?" He said, "Well, we're not getting rid of anything; we're simply going to consult with the manufacturers." And I thought, "What kind of announcement is this? They're not banning trans fats. They're not banning junk food," and I thought, "Why am I here?"

Curiously enough, a journalist said, "But, Rosario, didn't the government ban junk food three years ago?" I said, "As far as I'm concerned, I think they did." But you really couldn't tell, because as we walked through the hallway of Bayview Middle School, you had a vending machine selling all sorts of things, and not just milk. So clearly, we didn't get rid of junk foods; they're still there. But the journalist believed we had banned junk food, and the public believed we had banned junk food, three years ago. Lo and behold, they banned nothing.

Speaker, through you I'm going to quote some stuff that clearly tells the story about what they did and didn't do three years ago. Here is an editorial from the Thunder Bay Chronicle. It says, "Move Toward Healthy Schools." That was mon ami M. Kennedy when he was the minister. He's gone now to bigger things. He's not elected, but he's gone somewhere. Just to read what the editorial said: "Just such a move was made yesterday by Ontario's new education minister. Gerard Kennedy told school boards that if they have contracts with pop and junk food companies to sell their products in elementary schools, cancel them." You get the drift? You get the impression that mon ami M. Kennedy said that he was going to cancel the contracts with any vending machine that had junk food in them. Isn't that what I hear, what you read?

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M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're reading the same thing, right?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The editorial goes on: "What a treat"—it's kind of amusing—"to have a cabinet minister be so forthright," indicating that the minister knew what he was talking about then, and that he was banning junk food. He was forthright, according to the Thunder Bay Chronicle. "It is simply common sense," they argue, borrowing a line from the Conservative Party, "that if on one hand, government warns about the growing epidemic of child obesity, it cannot on the other hand have its schools encouraging child obesity by allowing the purveyors of pop and chips exclusive access to students in exchange for a cut of profits."

You follow? I hope some of you are listening because the editorial indicates, understands and believes that mon ami M. Kennedy had banned junk food because he was so clear and forthright.

It goes on: "It is bad enough that schools entered into these agreements in the first place to recoup some of the money removed from their budgets by previous provincial administrations," meaning the Conservative government.

"But Ontarians need to feel secure that schools consistently place the best interests of their children above all else. These contracts—and some Thunder Bay schools have them—do not serve those interests.

"Kennedy is saying the government will not compensate boards for the costs of cancelling contracts as ordered. It tells boards they should have known better than to go down this road." I hope some of the Liberals are listening to this. "But what are the consequences of this loss of revenue to cash-strapped schools?"

"Kennedy reminded boards his government is working on a plan to boost the revenue they receive. But that is a long-term proposition"—Liberals speak in the long term—you know, it goes on and on—"and Kennedy wants the pop and chip machines out of schools right away."

Do you understand? I'm not making this up. This is the Thunder Bay Chronicle that clearly—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Why the Thunder Bay Chronicle?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, are you somehow in disagreement with what they're saying? Because they were supporting you guys.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm listening to you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm assuming the Thunder Bay Chronicle is an objective paper up there covering the news as they see it. As they saw mon ami M. Kennedy being clear and forthright and he was banning junk food, they had a clear understanding of what they were doing. Clearly they were wrong. They didn't ban a thing.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We have been quite clear we're expanding—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh no, you're quite clear. Oh yeah, no, Liberals are always very, very clear, and you can tell from the editorial from Thunder Bay that Liberals were very, very clear.

It's okay, Speaker. Let her speak. Let her speak. It's okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member has the floor and I'd like to hear you. I'll return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I think we need to give every Liberal member an opportunity to speak when they're standing or sitting. It's only fair. They have so many members in this place, they can't even get two minutes. Please, let them speak. This way we can have a dialogue, interact with each other. It's quite okay.

I have something here from the—hey, Jim, oh no, it's not from your parts. It's the Kingston Whig-Standard: "Ontario to Get Rid of Junk Food at Schools." You

understand? It's very clear. Some members believe that you were not as clear as that, but I think you were clear. "Education minister Gerard Kennedy plans to go ahead as soon as possible with the Liberals' plan to get rid of junk food and sugary drinks in elementary schools." That's so funny. Did you ban junk food, because the article says you're getting rid of it?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All the fine Liberals are saying, "Yeah, yeah", but we're going to take an eternity to do it, right? Except that from a media perspective, the media says, "They're banning junk food," and the poor citizens watching this parliamentary channel think, "They've banned junk food." Don't you agree that if you read this article, you've got—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: See, the good doctor says, "Yeah, of course, because it's common sense, right?" If you say you're getting rid of junk food, the public says, "Oh, they're getting rid of it." But the Liberals say, "Nah, we didn't quite say it that way." But they don't even say, "We didn't quite say it that way"; they were quite happy to have the Kingston Whig-Standard say, "Yeah, we're getting rid of it," and they got a good hit. Three years later, a journalist asked me, "Did they ban junk food?" Because even the journalist gave the hit and moves on, so as to allow the public to believe that's what happened.

I have to complete this quote: "We don't expect them to be offering junk food to kids in elementary school," Mr. Kennedy said yesterday—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Elementary.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Elementary—as if, somehow, to suggest that because it's only elementary, they were not completely telling the full story. What difference does it make? The point is, whether it's elementary or secondary, the inference is—and the good doctor understands it—that you're banning junk food, and you didn't do it. It doesn't matter whether it's elementary or secondary; you didn't do it.

Let me move on. There's more. I always love when I have my Liberal friends dealing with us, because the member from Guelph—she's so insistent, too, as she says these things. "It's elementary," she says. I know it's elementary; that's why I'm pointing these things out.

Then I got a news-style release communiqué from the government which says, "Healthy Food in Schools Means Healthier Kids." The paragraph says: "Toronto—The McGuinty government is making schools healthier places for students to learn by directing school boards to remove all junk food..." Do you understand? What does it mean?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Keep going.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Keep going—oh, of course—"to remove all junk food from vending machines in elementary schools"—

Hon. John Wilkinson: Ah, vending machines. Read the whole quote.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You guys crack me up. I just read the whole quote. I just read it; what more do you

want me to read? "Getting junk food out of elementary school vending machines is the next step in our plan to make all of Ontario's schools healthier places to learn...." Good citizens of Ontario, you've just got to be in this place to love it, because you don't get the full flavour of this exchange, right? But I hope you get just a little bit of the flavour of what we do in this place.

What I just read to you from the communiqué is that they're banning junk food. You didn't do that. My friend Bob Delaney from Mississauga-Streetsville is just enjoying himself silly with his gestures, because he's trying to imitate me, but he can't do it; he just can't do what I'm doing. There's no point in trying to imitate me, because it's not working for you.

"Getting junk food out of elementary school vending machines is the next step in our plan...." Sorry, you didn't do any of it, and Speaker, you know because we all know, right? But it's part of this Liberal game. You put out a communiqué, tell them what you want. The media, sometimes helpful, says, "Yeah, they're getting rid of the junk food," and the next day, it's gone; the issue is just gone, marvellously. As all of the people who get that hit say—they absorb the message, "Junk food is gone," and it's not. Three years later, the vending machines and the junk food are still in our schools.

As I said in my response to the minister's statement, vending machines have been proliferating like rabbits in all of our school system. Why? Because schools need money. Junk food is good money for schools. Schools know that it's bad, principals know that it's bad, teachers know that it's bad, all of the health community knows that it's bad, but schools are still selling junk. Why? It's about the pecunia: They need the pecunia in the schools, and that's why they haven't banned junk food. But for all intents and purposes, the government had done it three years ago.

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When I go into schools—indeed, even the school where the minister and Premier chose to make this announcement—I see the high-calorie, sugar- and salt-laden junk food being offered to our schoolchildren. In some places, schools don't put the junk in the vending machine, they put in it a different carrying machine. They actually cart it around as a way of getting around the vending machine. Some of you from Peterborough might think, "No one is doing that," but they've got the wheelbarrow and other stuff to wheel that stuff into the schools so kids can buy the garbage. Why? Because they need the money. So it's laughable when the minister stands up and says, "Oh, schools voluntarily made progress." Now they're into voluntary; at the time they were banning. Now they're into voluntary because they're admitting they've done nothing in three years.

Then she says, "Kids have great ideas about the health of their schools and we need to involve them." Of course; why wouldn't we? It's nice that some kids think that we've got a deal with these products. But on the whole I tell you this, Speaker—because you've got children as well, correct? Of course you do. If they have a choice

between going to the junk and eating carrots and blueberries, what are they going to go after first? They're going to go after the candy first. If you read what's in these candies, these chocolate bars—I'm telling you. We were just reading with mon amie Madame Gélinas—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, you've got some too. But open the label, open it up. There is so much sugar and salt and crap in these things, and people are ingesting and digesting it, if they can, every day, adults and others. If you go in this cafeteria, what have you got down there?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Broccoli.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Broccoli, my foot. You've got vending machines where you've got potato chips. What else have you got?

Interjection: Carrots.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, yeah, carrots. You've got vending machines selling crap downstairs. That's a fine way to lead. If you want to lead, get rid of the junk food in this place. But if you want to make money, because there's a contract with some of these guys—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Union people make some of these foods.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, I see. But if union people make trans fats that lead into so many products that we don't like, does that mean we keep the trans fats? No. If products are produced and they cause difficulty to our body, physiological changes, physiological disorders, and they kill us, whether they're produced by unions or not, we've got to get rid of them. Yes?

I put the health of our bodies ahead of anything that is produced by anyone, whether they're in unions or otherwise. If it's bad for you, it's bad for all of us. If it's going to kill you, then you've got to deal with it. If asbestos, a product that Stephen Lewis fought to deal with in terms of recognizing that it dealt a heavy blow to people by causing cancers—lethal, deadly, painful cancers—we had to deal with it because it kills people. It kills union members. It kills non-union members. It kills people. It's bad.

So today's measure really is a little, tiny thing. As usual, I was surprised today that the Liberals didn't say, "This is historic," because there would have been a revulsion in my body that I could not have contained. Usually the Liberals preface their remarks by saying, "This is historic." Usually when they say that you know there's nothing in it, because they've got to puff it up. At least they didn't do that, in all fairness.

But to be fair and to congratulate for a brief second—because I don't want to do that for too long; otherwise people will think I'm overextending my praise for them—"the bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria. The minister may make regulations"—may make; I think Mr. Klees made reference to this—"exempting from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products."

Whatever you might think—good or bad—it sounds positive. You at least have to say, “Okay, that’s good.” So we say to the Liberals, “It’s nice that you did this; it’s really nice. You really moved a little step.” How could I not say that that little step is good? You have to say, “It’s a little step,” and so you want to pat the Liberals on the back and say, “Okay, you did good.”

But then they say, “The bill also adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in the regulations. Power is given to the Minister of Education to create policies, guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity.”

My point is, why don’t you just ban them? Why don’t you just ban junk food? How difficult is it to do that? If junk food is indeed harmful, deleterious to your health, and we know it is, why not just say, “We’re banning it”? But when I went to Bayview Middle School and I was waiting for the Premier to say, “We’re banning them,” as he did three years ago by way of mon ami Monsieur Kennedy, then the Minister of Education, he said, “Oh, no, no, no. We’re not banning anything; we’re consulting. We are consulting the manufacturer.”

This little addition in this bill about junk food is simply an afterthought to create the illusion that something is being done about vending machines. When will the minister use the power to get rid of these machines and compensate boards by providing funding to replace the revenue that schools have come to depend on? That’s the point: The minister has the power—indeed, the Premier has the power—to ban junk food. He didn’t do that; she didn’t do that; the Liberal government isn’t doing that. They’re consulting again, three years later.

Do you see why I get tired? Do you feel it? I get tired. I have to repeat the same things. Three years later, they’re banning it. Three years later, they’re banning it, but, no, they’re consulting. It’s never going to end. Three years from now I’m going to be making the same speech about the government doing something else that moves the health initiative just another little step. It’s not very much.

My friend Madame Gélinas pointed out that: “Health Canada has required that food labels list the amount of trans fat in the nutrition facts section for most foods. Products with less than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving may be labelled as free of trans fats. These labelling allowances are not widely known, but as an awareness of them develops, controversy over truthful labelling is growing. In Canada, trans fat quantities on labels include naturally occurring trans fats from animal sources.” What Health Canada is doing is saying to manufacturers, “You’re going to have to label these trans fats.” As soon as the public starts understanding what is being put in these products, assuming they can read it—because I have to tell you, before Wayne sees me, that you can’t even read this stuff.

You understand what I’m saying: You can’t read the labels. The print is so tiny that an almost senior citizen like me can’t read it, even with glasses that are designed for fine print. Nobody can read these labels. But the public is becoming more and more aware that trans fats are harmful. And what does it do when you build awareness? The public is not going to buy those products. So already we are getting the manufacturers to stop producing foods that have trans fats in them.

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So the government now announces, “We are dropping”—in the ministry document, or at least in the ministerial statement, it says they are “dropping” trans fats. What does “dropping” mean? It doesn’t even say “abolishing.” She says, “We are dropping them,” as if somehow trans fats can be held up and they drop down to the floor. What does it mean? Does dropping mean banning? But if they wanted to ban, why don’t they say “banning”? Does dropping mean reducing? But if they wanted to say “reduction,” why don’t they say “reduction”? “Dropping” is intended to suggest they are dropping it off, as if to suggest the banning of those products. They’re not doing any of that. The government is moving in the direction of where the public is at and where the manufacturers are going. So when the government does this little picayune step, do I say, “This is great. This is revolutionary”? I can’t do that. It’s just a little thing. I wish that we could deal with substantive bills in this place rather than little, tiny, minuscule, mini, picayune bills. I get a little bit tired. Let me look through this bill to see if I missed anything.

Mr. Dave Levac: Frustrated?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Sometimes frustrated.

“A board shall ensure that a food or beverage offered for sale to pupils in a vending machine on school premises meets any nutritional standards set out in the regulations, including any applicable standards relating to trans fat content.”

My point is that it’s not good enough. It should be banned. If it’s bad, member from Brant, former school principal and father, it should be banned, n’est-ce pas? If it’s not banned, it can’t be that bad. That’s the implication; that’s the inference I make. If it’s bad, it should be banned. If it’s not bad enough, they’re not banning it. Therefore, trans fats are, by implication and inference, good. But it’s still there. It doesn’t say they’re banning—again, three years later.

Further regarding the regulations: “governing nutritional standards for food and beverages and for any ingredient contained in food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity.” Like when? “Requiring boards to ensure that the standards referred to in clause (d),” which I just read, “are met.” When? What are the timelines? There are no timelines. The timelines are Liberal timelines, and Liberal timelines are, “We’re going to do it sometime in the future, and when we get there, we’re going to repeat it again and move on and repeat and repeat”: announce, pronounce, preannounce, post an-

nounce, etc. It's a Liberal syndrome. It's a syndrome about announcements. They never do the job. They're always repeating the same things. That's why it gets tiring. There's more. There's got to be more.

When we ask why we are keeping these vending machines in our schools, schools are doing it because they don't have any money. Minister Kennedy, the then-minister, said, "Don't ask for any money. You're not going to get any." Therefore, schools keep on having the vending machines there in order to be able to make money. You understand, Speaker, that schools and parents are fundraising to the tune of \$560 million a year. What it speaks to is a lack of funding in our school system, because if we had adequate money, the vending machines would not be there. If we had adequate money in our schools, the minister would ban junk food. The minister implicitly and explicitly condones the use of vending machines because she is not giving enough money to our schools in order for them to deal with the day-to-day problems in our school system. She condones it and they de facto exist because of a lack of money, and the fundraising by parents is going on year after year and the fundraising increases year after year.

Why do parents do that? I'll tell you why and I'll read some quotes:

"I don't agree with this means of fundraising"—that two-tier problem where schools can fundraise for any purpose, including additions to a school or portables or a rec room in a school, whatever it is. "It certainly lets the Liberal government off the hook to provide critical funding for our children. What does this mean? In exchange for funding, will our schools be named after private companies now: St. Coca Cola, let us say?" A parent from St. Sofia school.

Another parent: "One obvious area where two tiers exist is the area of school libraries. Northern schools have had their libraries decimated, and these too often are in communities with only minimal or no public library structure."

Jim Neill, teacher-librarian, another parent: "Only the rich could afford proper education. I have two kids that need tutors but I'm unable to give them that. In rural Ontario, we've had to fundraise for new math books."

Talking about math books, if you listen to the government, they've been giving millions and millions of dollars to deal with these issues, including books, yet this parent is saying, "We're fundraising for new math books."

"I am fundraised to death. Now I must go to fundraise for my daughter's graduation ceremony." Cathy Parent, mother of two.

"At Palmerston Avenue public school we anticipated that the government would rely on parents, driven by love and concern for their children, to fundraise, to fill in the funding gaps created by the government." Vanessa Ring, mother of two.

"As a mother of three, I am currently desperately trying to avoid going to our local public school. It is not as well funded or supported as the good schools just a

few blocks away. Our choices are to pay for private school, attend a second-tier school or move three blocks and several hundred thousand dollars over and attend a good public school in a wealthier area that is supported by endless and fruitful fundraising activities." Alison Morgan.

You get the picture. Parents are tired. They're tired of fundraising for essential things, something the government and the minister claim they've dealt with. Oh, yes, they have more to do, but you would think, with all of these evolutionary additions they have put into our school system, surely they would have dealt with these tiny little issues that parents are dealing with in their schools. They haven't. They're fundraising to death. They're deathed out of fundraising, and they don't want to do it anymore, yet they keep doing it for the love of their children—560 million bucks a year, almost \$1 billion of fundraising, out of people's pockets for essential things. How good can this education system be, and how good can this Liberal government be, when parents are raising close to \$1 billion a year? It can't be that good. Something is wrong in the kingdom of Ontario when parents are fundraising to death.

1750

The minister says, "We've got teachers doing 20 minutes of exercises in the schools." Let me tell you and the citizens of Ontario that only 34% of the schools have gym teachers—34%. Physical education teachers are trained to train students. Regular teachers are not trained to do physical education. What did the government do two years ago or so? They got kids jumping up and down in the classroom. I don't know what they're doing. No criticism to teachers, but I don't think they know what they're doing, and the government claims, including mon amie from Guelph, who was a former school trustee, "Oh, no; they're doing a lot. They're jumping up and down for 20 minutes. It's really great." We don't know what they're doing. We don't have any physical education teachers. Only 35% of the schools do. You're not doing a thing. If you were serious, member from Guelph, if you were serious as a former school trustee and close to these issues, you would say to the Premier and to the minister, "We've got to get physical education teachers into our school system and get these kids to actually do something about their health." Jumping up and down in the school for 20 minutes won't do.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Well, what do you think they're doing for 20 minutes in the classroom? Are they walking around the classroom, one after the other? Are they moving all the desks out of the way so they can jump in the middle, up and down? What do you think they're doing?

Mr. Dave Levac: Making their heart rates go up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So, member from Brant, former school principal—

Mr. Dave Levac: Phys ed teacher.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Were you a phys ed teacher as well? See, you would know. You've got to do a two-

minute rebuttal. You would know. What could they be doing for 20 minutes? But if you hear the Minister of Education or the member from Guelph, because you've got a lot of Liberal boosters in the back, on all sides of this House, they'll say, "Oh, no. We're dealing with this issue. We're getting kids to exercise." I'm sorry. They're not doing a good job of it and the kids are not getting the exercise they need because we don't have physical education. I've got to tell you, by the way—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: There are schools in Guelph where there are perfectly good programs—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to come for a walk in that classroom and see how you do it. But I understand.

We have a lot of work to do. And by the way, most kids, I say to the Minister of Education, don't know what good foods are. Now, to be fair, some mothers and fathers, individually or collectively, wherever they may be, are probably doing a good job, doing their best. But I know, as a grandfather—can you believe it? As a grandfather and as a father, I know that if you leave kids to their devices, they will go to the junk food in a minute. Yes or no, Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I disagree. If there's a healthy choice, they will eat it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They will not do it.

Speaker, don't be so uptight. It's okay. We're having a discussion here.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, no, because he's got to do his job; I understand. But it was a good exchange. It wasn't so bad.

They, kids, will go to the chocolate. I would go to the chocolate. I love dark chocolate. I would go to dark chocolate in a minute. I could stuff myself for hours on dark chocolate. I've got to tell you, I don't like dairy, the milk products stuff; I don't like it. Dark chocolate is what I would eat. But I—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it's even better for you. Not too much, though. I follow the golden mean of Aristotle: everything in moderation, because anything beyond that can cause bad problems to your body.

The point is that we've got a big job to do in the school system, in this place. Minister, remember, we've got a vending machine down here. We've got to get rid of it. We've got to lead.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Starting with the schools.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, we lead here. We've got to lead here, and we've got to get rid of this vending machine, because if you don't lead here, it means we can't do it out there, okay? So we've got to do that. And, Minister, I was just saying—because I know you were busy—we've got to get physical education teachers in the classroom. You're about to say we are.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, because I thought you were. No; we only have 34% of our schools that have physical education teachers. You will admit, as someone

who is serious about physical education, that you need training. I don't know what to do with some things. And, yes, I could learn, it's true, but when you're talking about kids in the elementary school system—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Daily physical activity is very important and it's working well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What's working well?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Daily physical activity, DPA, for 20 minutes a day.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I would simply say I disagree with you, because the 20 minutes a day I'm sure is not working. And with all due respect on all sides—to the teachers as well—they are doing their best, but we do need to do a little more.

Yes, getting rid of trans fats would be great, wouldn't it? And if we're doing it, why don't we say we're banning it, we're getting rid of it? Why don't we just say that? You have an opportunity in the next couple of days, because we've got a couple of days, to say, "You're right, Marchese. We're going to ban it," and just add it in.

Interjection: Put forth an amendment. We'll support the amendment.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that what you want, an amendment saying we're going to ban it? Is that what you want? Are you going to convince the minister that if I say so—

Interjection: A friendly, thoughtful amendment—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can do that. When we're debating this bill, I can just write a little addition.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. We're going to ban junk food because, as mon amie Madame Gélinas said, getting rid of trans fats is but a little, little thing in the scheme of things. When you see these chocolates that I was showing—Wayne was getting upset that I was showing them—when you see the ingredients—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The little chocolate bars? It's scary. We read that together. Every two words has salt or sugar before it—yes or no?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What does it say?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sugar, glucose, fructose; it goes on.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it repeats itself in terms of sugar and salt attached to different kinds of products that are in there. That's a lot of junk food to put in your body. How can we put that stuff in here? How could we do it? But we're doing it every day. Mr. Kormos knows what I mean because next week he's going to speak for 20 minutes about—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They're telling you that because you're not the critic. You only have 20 minutes. I know you need more time. I understand.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've only got time to inhale.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You'll have plenty of that. He'll have 20 minutes to talk about the need to eat healthy foods. We all know that obesity is a problem and

so we've got to deal with junk food. We have to deal with that. I take the Minister at her word that if I introduce a motion—did you say that you would consider it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I didn't.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: She said she wouldn't consider it.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: What do you mean, "a thoughtful motion"? We're going to ban junk food. Should I put "thoughtful," in it? I don't know, if I put "thoughtful," it might not do what he said. How much more thought do you have to put into the fact that junk food is bad, that sugar, salt and calories are bad for you? How much more thoughtfulness do you need in that regard?

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, we were actually challenging the Premier—at least a journalist was—to define which junk foods we're getting rid of. The member from Guelph is challenging me to define, and the journalist was challenging the Premier to define, what junk food was, and he said—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: That's why we're putting it in a regulation. You can't define it for me.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You see what I mean? So why do you give the indication that you're banning junk food when you're not doing it? Because you don't have a clue what you're banning, what you're getting rid of, what you're dropping, what you're consulting on, what

you're regulating. You don't have a clue. Shouldn't you have a clue before you introduce a bill? We're going to introduce a bill that says—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: We actually do have a guideline that—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, let me know when you want to stand up to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask that you involve the Speaker in this conversation, if you will.

I return to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Here is another package beside me: "Crunchy Werther's toffee with bits of hazelnut and almond in fine milk chocolate." I can't stand milk chocolate. Look at the ingredients. Let me get my other glasses. Hold on.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We've got two minutes; hold on. It says here, "calories 20; fat content one gram; saturated .05"—that's not bad. Trans is zero.

Mr. Mike Colle: Zero trans fats.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But there's more; there's more.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
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Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / adjointe parlementaire au ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre des Richesses naturelles

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McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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Miller, Paul (ND)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Moridi, Reza (L)	Richmond Hill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (L)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services (Community Safety) / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels (Sécurité communautaire)
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Oraziotti, David (L)	Sault Ste. Marie	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (L)	Kitchener–Conestoga	Parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for women's issues / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Sorbara, Greg (L)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (L)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
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Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Children and Youth Services / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (L)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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First Session, 39th Parliament

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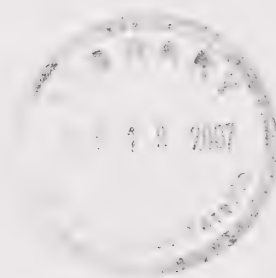
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Wednesday 12 December 2007

Mercredi 12 décembre 2007



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 12 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 12 décembre 2007

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FREDERICK BANTING HOMESTEAD

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise to bring to the attention of this House the recommendations made by the Conservation Review Board on the future of Sir Frederick Banting's homestead in Alliston.

In their report, they wrote that "cultural heritage value or interest exists in Frederick Banting being born and raised on this Ontario farm property, and that it was this farm that instilled those qualities and knowledge and provided the support that led to his discovery of insulin." The board went on to state that, "Cultural heritage value or interest also exists in the way in which the community of Alliston, now part of the Town of New Tecumseth, has embraced and commemorates Frederick Banting and the Banting homestead as an expression of the identity and historic achievement of the community."

These statements reflect those that I have expressed on more than 70 occasions in this House. To that end, today I'm tabling a resolution that reads as follows: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should support the town of New Tecumseth and the Sir Frederick Banting Legacy Foundation by ensuring that the recommendations made by the Conservation Review Board on the future of the Sir Frederick Banting homestead in Alliston are enacted and that the government of Ontario should take every measure necessary to ensure that this property is transferred to either the town of New Tecumseth or the Sir Frederick Banting Legacy Foundation for the purpose of creating an educational and interpretive centre on a non-profit basis, such as a camp for diabetic youth, and to ensure that the property is properly maintained."

I can think of no better way for the new Minister of Culture in the McGuinty government and member for Barrie to begin her term in office than to support this resolution and ensure that it is enacted.

CANADIAN SOLDIERS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: First of all, I'd like to acknowledge that we made some headway last week, compelling Prime Minister Stephen Harper to consider revising the deadline to award Constable Chris Garrett the Cross of Valour that he so deserves.

I had the great honour to attend a Christmas tree display this past weekend. This display was organized by Jaimie Corriveau of CFB Trenton's Military Family Resource Centre. The theme is entitled "Evergreen Memories of Home: A holiday salute to our deployed soldiers."

These are no ordinary Christmas trees. This is a display of 14 Christmas trees decorated to represent the 10 provinces and three territories. The 14th tree is a peace tree and honours our fallen soldiers. This tree displays the name of each of the soldiers we have lost in the war in Afghanistan. I was honoured and touched to be in attendance when Lieutenant Colonel Debbie Miller, wing administration officer, lit the peace tree. This touching ceremony was shared by civilians and military personnel alike, including the families of our soldiers. This display will be on for the whole week until Christmas.

VISITORS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would also like to acknowledge some people from my riding who are here visiting Queen's Park today: Delphine Patchett, John Sharko, Victoria Sharko and Regan Trotter, in the members' west gallery. Welcome.

NATIVE LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: On at least 10 separate occasions, I've tried to get answers from the aboriginal affairs minister about newspaper reports of a development freeze on local Ontario Realty Corp. properties because of the Six Nations/Caledonia land dispute. They include the Sprucedale correctional centre, a former OPP office and a horticultural research farm—all near Simcoe—the Jarvis and Canfield MTO yards, the Cayuga courthouse, Rock Point Provincial Park, Selkirk Provincial Park, 4,700 acres in South Cayuga, 1,400 acres in Townsend, as well as over 500 acres at both the Burtch Correctional Centre and Douglas Creek Estates.

If, indeed, these properties are being used as a bargaining chip, the question is, why? Will they be handed over to Six Nations? Which side of the negotiating table asked for this in the first place? Why is Norfolk county being targeted?

As MPP, I have visited all of these properties, and at least seven of the 12 are not in the former Haldimand tract. Does the Haldimand tract no longer apply to land claims negotiations? Why aren't there similar conditions on government land elsewhere in the Haldimand tract, in

Kitchener or in Cambridge, or are we in my area seen as low-hanging fruit?

Local mayors ask me about this, but until the veil of secrecy is lifted, the only information I have is printed in the newspapers.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Today at Queen's Park, we have amongst us firefighters from across Ontario, members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. We're proud to have them in our midst and amongst us, because we know that these are women and men who run into dangerous scenarios that others flee.

But these firefighters make three specific points here at Queen's Park today. One is the grief and chaos that this government's elimination of a retirement age has caused in the firefighting profession. That's why New Democrats are in accord with firefighters in Ontario, who call for a legislative remedy to the dilemma and crisis that the elimination of a retirement age has created amongst firefighters in Ontario. We will join with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association in pursuing a legislative endeavour to create a retirement age of 60 for any firefighter engaged in fire suppression or training activities.

Similarly, those firefighters are seeking some correction of the mediation/arbitration/conciliation process created in 1997, which is demonstrated to have created huge delays, as long as four years, in the settlement of contracts. No worker, firefighters included, has any business being denied a contract for four years. We will pursue that remedy as well, shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm with Ontario's firefighters.

PARENTING AND FAMILY LITERACY CENTRES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: A month ago, the McGuinty government announced \$6 million of support for 89 parenting and family literacy centres across this province, including two brand new centres in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The parenting and family literacy centres are located in high-needs communities, and focus on providing opportunities for young children to build essential early literacy and numeracy skills through stories, music and reading, while providing parents with a supportive environment to engage with their kids and help them to succeed in school and life.

I'm pleased to let members of this Legislature know that in my riding of Ottawa Centre, the family and literacy centres located in Cambridge Street Community Public School and Hilson Avenue Public School are doing extremely well, thanks to the funding received from the McGuinty government. Our local Early Years coordinator reports that families in our community are making use of the new centres on a daily basis, and the support continues to grow. Our dedicated team of early childhood educators in Ottawa Centre is working hard to

ensure that these parenting and family literacy centres are engaging families in our community. I want to thank all the parents and teachers for their enthusiastic involvement in the program.

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These great services to parents and children of Ottawa Centre would not have been possible without the support of the McGuinty government. I'm proud to be part of a government that believes that investing in our children and families is the foundation to building a strong community. I know that our government will continue to provide a strong foundation for success, ensuring that together we move Ontario forward.

TOURISM

Mr. Ted Arnott: I wish to congratulate the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville on his appointment as Minister of Tourism.

The new minister assumes office at a time when our tourism industry needs our support more than ever before. For many consecutive months, Ontario has seen a dramatic decline in the number of American visitors coming to enjoy our hospitality, our events and attractions. The most recent numbers show a decline of more than 10% in September since last year. Worse still, same-day travel was down by more than 15%.

Writing off the American tourism market, as the McGuinty Liberal government has done, is really hitting home for our tourist operators. This means lost opportunities and fewer jobs.

Our new Minister of Transportation, currently besieged by the auditor's report, would want us to believe that his new upgraded Ontario driver's licence helps to solve our US passport problem. In fact, it only makes it easier for Ontario residents to go cross-border shopping.

The upgraded Ontario driver's licence does nothing to help bring Americans back to Ontario, because they may still need a US passport to get home, meaning they still won't be able to come to Ontario without one.

Instead of leading people to believe that the upgraded licence helps tourism, the government must immediately present a comprehensive plan to strengthen the industry in the short and medium terms, focusing on an effective marketing strategy. The government needs to get to work.

MUSICAN

Mr. Mario Sergio: Last Friday I had the honour of attending an exciting event held in my riding of York West. MusiCan, the national music education charity of the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, awarded seven schools in my riding with a \$30,000 grant for musical instruments. This money will go a long way in helping hundreds of youth who aspire to become great musicians.

The event included Toronto's own Jully Black, the chart-topping, platinum-selling artist who grew up at

Jane and Finch in my own riding of York West as well. She is truly an inspiration to the future musical artists who filled Driftwood Public School last Friday evening.

I would like to thank the Toronto District School Board for hosting this inspirational event, and my deepest appreciation as well to the organizers of MusiCan for continuing to encourage young people to pursue their dreams in the music world. Since its inception in 1997, MusiCan and its sponsors have donated over \$2.3 million to the program, assisting 165 postgraduate students and over 120,000 students across Canada.

Again, I would like to acknowledge and thank those organizations that cultivate and promote the positive impact music makes in every community. With their support, many young people can look forward to an inspiring, successful and fulfilled future in the music world.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to highlight one of the milestones of my wonderful community. Richmond Hill is home to one of the most unique observatories on this continent. The David Dunlap Observatory was established in 1935 on a 200-acre parkland.

At the grand opening of this historical structure, the former Prime Minister Mackenzie King praised the observatory as "a gift to science all over the world."

It was at this observatory that in 1971, Professor Tom Bolton, a Canadian astronomer with an international reputation, verified the black hole theory. And later, in 1987, Dr. Ian Shelton discovered a supernova. These studies and discoveries paved the way for a better understanding of our universe.

It is with great regret that I bring to you the news that the University of Toronto has decided to close this observatory and sell its vast land to developers.

As the MPP for Richmond Hill, I hope that we can form a partnership with all levels of government, private sector and the public to protect this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance for our country.

I welcome Councillor Godwin Chan, Dr. Ian Shelton and Mr. Rupi Jeji in the members' gallery.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I too, like Mr. Kormos, want to pay tribute to the men and women of the Ontario fire service and the organization that represents them, the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association. Would all members join me in welcoming firefighters from around the province today.

Firefighters are vital to keeping our communities safe. I'm proud to say that our government recognizes that firefighters protect us and, in return, we must protect them.

We actively support Ontario firefighters in many ways. Through the Ontario fire grant, the McGuinty government invested an unprecedented \$30 million into fire services across this province, the first time in 20 years

that the province has invested in Ontario fire services. These funds help provide training and equipment and support fire prevention and public education programs.

Last session, our government brought forward legislation that ensures that our firefighters from all communities are treated fairly in the face of occupational illnesses. We believed it was necessary to bring forward legislation to provide fair treatment and respect in regard to workplace compensation claims for occupational disease and heart injuries.

Our government recognizes the hard work and dedication that firefighters across this province demonstrate every day. Situations that others are fleeing from, firefighters run to every day.

We thank the men and women of the Ontario fire service for putting themselves in high danger and great risk on our behalf.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GROW OPS DISCLOSURE ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LA DIVULGATION DE LA PRÉSENCE D'EXPLOITATIONS DE CULTURE DE MARIJUANA

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act respecting the disclosure of information about marijuana grow operations / *Projet de loi 18, Loi ayant trait à la divulgation de renseignements sur les exploitations de culture de marijuana.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill requires property owners and agents to disclose information to prospective tenants and purchasers about the use of a property for marijuana grow operations. The bill also requires chiefs of police to disclose information to the public about current and former marijuana grow operations in a municipality.

INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT (PUBLIC TRANSIT EXPENSE TAX CREDIT), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU (CRÉDIT D'IMPÔT POUR DÉPENSES DE TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide for a tax credit for expenses incurred in using public transit / *Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu afin de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les dépenses engagées au titre des transports en commun.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a very important component of supporting public transit while it's supporting our economy and the environment. Gridlock is choking the economy and the environment, and the government's Move Ontario 2020 doesn't move until 2011. GO Transit is sputtering, according to media reports.

How is this legislation going to impact commuters in Durham region? For example, individuals commuting from Durham will spend \$100 a week, or \$5,000 a year. This expenditure is contributing to saving the environment. I would encourage the Speaker and the members of the government to speak to the Premier and the Minister of Finance to support commuters in this province who are supporting the environment.

1350

ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH (TORONTO) ACT, 2007

Mr. Zimmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting St. Andrew's Congregation of the United Church of Canada at Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

DIRECT ELECTION OF THE NIAGARA REGIONAL CHAIR ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉLECTION AU SCRUTIN GÉNÉRAL DU PRÉSIDENT DU CONSEIL RÉGIONAL DE NIAGARA

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to provide for the direct election of the Niagara Regional Council chair / Projet de loi 20, Loi prévoyant l'élection au scrutin général du président du conseil régional de Niagara.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: This act, if passed, would allow for the actual taxpayers of the region of Niagara to directly elect the regional chair, probably the most significant municipal position in all of Niagara. It certainly has worked very effectively in Halton region as well as Kitchener-Waterloo. I believe the taxpayers of Niagara would like to see it instituted in time for the 2010 municipal election.

PROVINCIAL PARKS AND MAJOR PROVINCIAL TOURIST ATTRACTIONS SIGN ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR L'ÉRECTION DE PANNEAUX DANS LES PARCS PROVINCIAUX ET À L'EMPLACEMENT D'IMPORTANTES ATTRACTIONS TOURISTIQUES PROVINCIALES

Mr. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to require bilingual signs in provincial parks, parks under the control of the Niagara Parks Commission and at major provincial tourist attractions / Projet de loi 21, Loi exigeant l'érection de panneaux bilingues dans les parcs provinciaux, dans les parcs sous le contrôle de la Commission des parcs du Niagara et à l'emplacement d'importantes attractions touristiques provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: C'est lors d'une visite des membres de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie de l'Amérique, accompagnés de membres de l'Afrique et de l'Europe, que le sujet a été signalé. Donc, la raison d'être de ce projet de loi est d'encourager le grand nombre de touristes francophones du Canada et du monde entier à visiter notre magnifique province et de leur faciliter l'accessibilité à ces merveilles ainsi qu'aux nombreux sites d'attractions de l'Ontario.

The purpose of this bill is to encourage the large number of francophone tourists from Canada and around the world to visit our wonderful province and to make it easy for them to access the many wonders and vistas of Ontario.

Mr. Phil McNeely: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm pleased to welcome to this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member would appreciate that that's not a point of order, as you know. Please allow us to finish the rotation dealing with the introduction of bills, and then I will call on your point of order that is not a point of order in a little bit.

BATTERY DEPOSIT AND RETURN ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LA CONSIGNATION DES PILES

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to establish a deposit and return system for batteries / Projet de loi 22, Loi établissant un régime de consignation pour les piles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: Earlier this year, Environment Canada released the Canadian Consumer Battery Baseline Study, which proves that the annual number of consumer batteries discarded is increasing dramatically. Batteries have the potential to release toxic substances into our land and water, including mercury, cadmium and lead. This bill enacts a new act that prohibits persons from selling a battery unless it meets the standards, prescribed by regulations made under the act, of being capable of being recycled. The goal is to increase proper disposal and recycling of batteries to keep them out of our landfills and protect our environment.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR
THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY
TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION
DES ANIMAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. Runciman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This is the reintroduction of a bill that amends the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, so that the standards of care in the act for keeping a cat or dog apply generally and are not limited to keeping the animal for breeding or sale.

VISITORS

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to welcome to this Legislature four members of the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association: Peter Kennedy, John Sobey, Erik Leicht and Dean Taylor. They are in the east visitors' lobby.

VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have the pleasure today to introduce, in the west gallery, students of the grade 12 history class from PCVS, with their two teachers, Steven Ainslie and Steven Deline. The most famous graduate of PCVS high school in Peterborough is Lester Pearson—we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of his Nobel peace prize.

We also have with us today Mr. Greg Simmons, a captain with the Peterborough fire service. Let's give them a warm welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITORS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome Stephen Emo, president, from the Collingwood Professional Fire Fighters Association.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Kormos: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I'm proud to ask others to join me in welcoming here today Mike Fowler, president of the Welland Professional Fire Fighters Association. He represents a fine community of women and men down in Niagara region.

VISITORS

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'd like to welcome two members of the Thunder Bay Professional Fire Fighters Association, Mr. Eric Nordlund and Mr. Guido Nadin, who are not sitting together today for some inexplicable reason.

1400

VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: Point of order: For all of us here, we welcome everyone to the gallery.

VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome one of the great firefighters from the city of York, Kevin McCarthy, who served with the famous Digger O'Dell, a great firefighter from New Brunswick who served the city of York well.

VISITORS

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'd like to have the House welcome four proud Burlington professional firefighters. We have Paul Cunningham, Dan Vanderslelie, Seandore Toth and Jeff Rock.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I welcome today Donna Dillman on the 67th day of her hunger strike against uranium mining and exploration in Frontenac county, accompanied by Sharon Howarth, Adriana Mugnatto-Hamu and Rita Bijon. I thank them all for attending the Legislature today.

VISITOR

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like the House to help me recognize Kyle Marsh, the former president of the Nipissing University student union, who's here today from North Bay.

VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming members of the Hamilton Professional Fire Fighters Association, our president, Henry Watson, and Ron Summers.

VISITORS

Hon. James J. Bradley: Since people are welcoming people, I'd like to welcome a delegation of firefighters from the great city of St. Catharines, led by their president, Terry Colburn.

VISITORS

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is also my pleasure today to welcome a delegation from the Sudbury Professional Firefighters Association and its president, Mr. Marc Gobbo.

VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted that we have with us here today Colin Hunter, who's the president of the Guelph firefighters' association, a wonderful group of firefighters.

VISITORS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I risk insulting my firemen when I don't introduce them, but at this time of year, when everyone is sending out their season's greetings, I want to introduce the newest grandchild to appear on the Van Bommel Christmas card, Katherine Anne Griffiths. Katie, as she's called by her brothers Blake and Nolan, was born in August, and she looks like a Cabbage Patch doll. Her brothers can't wait till she can don skates because they say they need a goalie for the net.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Congratulations from all members.

VISITORS

Mr. Dave Levac: Since it didn't work the last time, let me introduce the president of the professional firefighters, Fred LeBlanc, and Mr. Brian George, the vice-president. Congratulations, gentlemen.

VISITORS

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Because my colleague from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex couldn't and there are so many other people who want to, I think we should welcome not only all the firefighters, but especially those from London, St. Thomas, Strathroy and everywhere else who haven't yet been introduced. Why don't we give them a big round of applause.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Mike Colle: I seek unanimous consent to allow all members to wear the Lung Cancer Canada pin in honour of Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have to welcome my good friend Warren Scott, from the St. Thomas Professional Firefighters Association, who is in the Speaker's gallery today. Welcome, Warren.

And to anyone who has not been introduced, whether you're a firefighter or a guest, welcome to Queen's Park today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader—the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That was wishful thinking on my part, Mr. Speaker.

In any event, a question to the Minister of Community Safety. During Premier McGuinty's time sitting in this chair, your party called for public inquiries on 153 separate occasions. We have many quotes attributed to Mr. McGuinty outlining why he felt a particular inquiry was required.

The Auditor General's report on the failings of the sex offender registry seems to not only fit the bill but exceed what your party in previous years felt was justification for a public inquiry. Minister, will you commit to such an inquiry, and if not, why not?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much for the question. No, we will not commit to a public inquiry. The Auditor General has issued his report with regards to the sex offender registry. He suggested some recommendations that would make that registry stronger. My ministry is actively implementing those recommendations.

There were some legislative changes that he believed should be included. We've filed an amendment to Christopher's Law. We will ensure that not only are we satisfied with 95% compliance but we will strive for 100% compliance.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'll run quickly over some of the Auditor General's findings on the registry: 365 sex offenders walking around our neighbourhoods with women, family and children unaware because of the system's failings; another 360 sex offenders released from federal custody, not included on the registry; close to \$9 million in operational funding for the registry reallocated by the OPP.

Minister, these are serious issues: money diverted, hundreds of sex offenders unmonitored who may well have committed serious crimes against women and children because the system failed them. This cries out for a public inquiry. If your positions in the past were more than specious double-talk, why are you refusing to call one now?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: None of us are happy and none of us suggest that reallocating money from the registry to other priorities is what we would've wanted. The OPP did it in the past. We have a guarantee from Commissioner Fantino that it will not happen in the future.

With regards to sex offenders walking the streets, let me tell you, all convicted sex offenders are not only registered, but they're being tracked.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We have confidence that Commissioner Fantino will do the right thing, but what the minister is saying is contrary to his party's rhetoric in opposition and their 153 separate calls for public inquiries.

The diversion of \$9 million from a public safety initiative into who knows what, hundreds of sex offenders roaming our streets and neighbourhoods unknown to families, committing who knows how many crimes—that doesn't meet the standard. That is apparently, and shamefully, what you are saying.

Minister, how can you, in good conscience, given your party's past positions and the alarming findings of the Auditor General, stand in your place today and then deny the very clear need for a public inquiry? How can you do that?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I believe it's very, very important to ensure that proper information is given to the people of Ontario. We are taking real action on the recommendations of the Auditor General. But let me answer and be specific on one particular instance and one suggestion that the leader of the official opposition makes with regards to sex offenders roaming rampant in Ontario. Are the 1,060 inmates—700 which were incarcerated and 360 under community supervision in federal custody at the time of the registry's inception—now on the registry? The answer is clear: Yes, they are all on the registry. Let's be very clear: They are all on the registry.

1410

RETAIL SALES TAX

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question to the Minister of Revenue. But first, congratulations to the member on her new position as Minister of Revenue.

Minister, yesterday the Auditor General's report showed even more bad news for Ontario taxpayers. Some 35,000 vendors are in default with compliance with retail sales tax, so \$967 million in sales tax are owing—almost a billion dollars. The McGuinty government, despite promises to the contrary, has increased taxes, user fees and hydro rates on the backs of seniors and working families. How can you justify those increases in taxes when you have almost a billion dollars owing in sales tax?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the question. Of course, as did all members of the government, I appreciated and welcomed the comments and observations of the Auditor General. I've met with the Auditor General and have assured him of our commitment to

following through on his recommendations. What was clear, when I spoke to the Auditor General, was that the previous government made next to no progress on addressing the auditor's recommendations on the RST program as far back as 2000. Standing in stark contrast to the Conservative record, the McGuinty government has moved the yardstick forward light years. As I discussed with the Auditor General, and as he is well aware, we are implementing a new information technology system that will ensure that no vendors will be left off the system. We are also implementing a new information technology system that will make the timeliness of collection activities more up to date, and we are going to have ongoing follow-up action to collect returns and defaults.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As the minister well knows, the Auditor General points out that the increase in accounts receivable is some 65% since his last audit. So if she thinks an increase in taxes owing is moving forward light years, that certainly does not bode well for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. Minister, Dalton McGuinty created this new golden oldie of a ministry: a minister, a limo, new political staff and stationery. Please tell me, though, that you're actually going to take concrete action and get to the bottom of this, and when you've found out, please tell me whose heads are going to roll.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate all the gratuitous comments from the member from Erie—Lincoln, the good old days that you were only too familiar with.

Under the McGuinty government, revenue collection has actually increased by 7%. Of course, there are always opportunities to improve the timeliness of collections, and we have introduced several initiatives that are currently being rolled out that will add to the timeliness and really improve our collections. The collections risk management project will prioritize audits. We are also introducing a risk scoring methodology that will be used to move the right accounts to the right collector for the appropriate collection action. We think that those initiatives, together with the other information technology system that we are putting in place, will greatly increase our revenue collection ability and we will see a vast improvement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I certainly hope the new minister will be an activist and not an apologist for the mistakes that have been made by your predecessor, and it's seen as a 65% increase in taxes owing. At the same time that you've let almost a billion dollars in sales tax go owing, you're cracking down on small ethnic campus and community newspapers. In fact, one particular newspaper has a million dollars in back taxes that you have now assigned. They do excellent work. Why are you cracking down on these small businesses instead of going after those billion dollars in back taxes?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As I have noted in my previous response, we are introducing a new information technology that will allow all of our businesses a greater opportunity to pay their taxes in a more timely and easy fashion. I had a briefing this morning with my ministry

staff, who advised me of a new accounts receivable program where we outline for our taxpayers the accounts payable that are still due and owing. It will bring it to their attention on a monthly basis so they will be able to take that into account when they're making their monthly remittance and pay back those accounts receivable that are still outstanding. Together with the information technology, we see a real program in place that is being rolled out through 2008 that will allow our taxpayers greater opportunities to meet their obligations to the province of Ontario.

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY SECTOR JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier should know that under the McGuinty government over the last five years no less than seven paper machines have been shut down and thousands of forest sector workers put out of their jobs in the Thunder Bay area. While the loss of thousands of good jobs is bad enough, the human toll in terms of the number of broken families and, sadly, the number of laid-off workers who have committed suicide is far worse. In tomorrow's economic statement, will Ontarians see any new, effective, concrete action from the McGuinty government to sustain Ontario's threatened manufacturing and forest sector jobs?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Of course, I can't comment on specifics that will be in the fall statement tomorrow. Let me say this: The government has already taken enormous steps to assist those communities and families that are not fully participating in Ontario's prosperity. When I reflect on the forestry sector, I think of over \$1 billion that we have invested in that particular sector. That's not to say there isn't more to be done and there isn't more that we can do. We will continue to work with those communities and families that are affected. We will continue to make the kinds of investments that are necessary to help that sector through these difficult times, a sector that, I'll remind the member opposite, is experiencing difficulties throughout North America, a sector that we're prepared to continue to work with in a very positive and proactive way.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government continues to try to pretend that somehow they've put \$1 billion into the forest sector. The fact of the matter is, most forest sector companies look at your so-called program and simply say: "We'll pass. This doesn't address our needs." The minister says that this is an issue affecting everyone. What's really happening is this: Forest sector jobs are leaving communities like Thunder Bay and they're moving to Quebec, they're moving to Manitoba and they're moving to the United States.

But there are some things that this government could do. This government has control over the industrial hydro

rate. That is something which could help to sustain not only forest sector jobs but other resource sector jobs and manufacturing sector jobs. Will we see—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Will we see, in tomorrow's economic statement, an industrial hydro rate that is reasonable and allows manufacturers to continue to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me just first address the premise of the question, because you suggested that nobody in the forest sector sees our actions as being particularly effective. Jamie Lim, the president of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, said, "Today's announcement is a home run by a government that has done more for the forest industry than any other government."

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The leader of the third party laughs at that industry. We're not laughing; we're working hard with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Would the minister speak through the Chair, please?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Jim Lopez, CEO of Tembec: "Premier Dalton McGuinty has stepped up and done more for this industry than anybody in recent memory. He's lowered wood costs, lowered electricity costs, reduced regulation, and he's been willing to listen."

As long as one family in that sector or any sector is looking for a job, this government will not rest. We will continue to invest and we will continue to receive the support that we have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government cites Mr. Lopez from Tembec. This would be the same Mr. Lopez who, the next day, announced that they were shutting down a paper machine in Kapuskasing and a mill in Cochrane; the same Jamie Lim who, later on, after that quote, said, "McGuinty government policies are devastating the forest sector and destroying thousands of jobs."

But it's not just the forest sector. Yesterday, I met with representatives of Xstrata, which has very big and substantial mining, smelting and refining operations in Sudbury and in Timmins. They came here for one specific reason: to deliver the message that if the industrial hydro rate goes any further, they will be looking at transferring—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I was wondering if the honourable member could get to the point of how that relates to his initial question in his supplementary, please.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It's about an industrial hydro rate—that if industrial hydro rates go any further, they will be moving jobs out of Ontario.

So I say again to the minister who thinks he can claim credit for everything and blame somebody else for the problems: Are we going to see a reasonable industrial

hydro rate which will allow manufacturers to sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The fact of the matter is that the price of electricity has gone down under the McGuinty government. In the case of—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, I'll also remind the member that in the mining sector the regulated price cap was maintained. But here's what another expert had to say about industrial energy price subsidization. He said, and put it in writing, "Industrial energy price subsidization can be attractive in theory, but tricky in practice. I think it far better to work with industry to lower its energy costs through greater efficiency, not through a"—his word—"scheme of subsidized rates." That was written by a Mr. Howard Hampton in a book called *Public Power* on page 251.

1420

HOME CARE

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Deputy Premier: No one is talking about a subsidized rate; we're talking about a reasonable industrial hydro rate.

But I want to ask the Deputy Premier about 200 Hamilton home care workers—who work for the Victorian Order of Nurses and St. Joseph's Home Care, not-for-profit agencies—who found out today that they're going to lose their jobs. Even though their organizations have 100-year reputations of providing good-quality home care, these workers are now going to be out of a job under the cutthroat competition formula for home care that the McGuinty government seems to want to implement now.

Hon. George Smitherman: I thank the honourable member for the question. In the last several years, our government has been in the privileged position of investing billions of dollars in Ontario's public health care system. That has resulted in substantial increased employment. When you employ more than 300,000 individuals, it is possible from time to time that there can be a disruption in their employment relationship. But I'm very, very confident that ongoing opportunities in health care will be available for those individuals.

In each and every one of the 14 community care access centre areas, we have a local board which conducts its processes and asks a variety of players in the local community to offer suggestions about how they would deliver the services. That's an independent process, but at the heart of it, employment in health care is on the rise, particularly related to service delivered in the home as we seek to enhance the capacity of our system to support those who are aging in place.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Victorian Order of Nurses and St. Joseph's have a 197-year record of credibility of providing good-quality home care in Hamilton. But now the McGuinty government says that their services are no longer needed.

What we're seeing is that under the McGuinty Liberals, just like under the former Conservatives, profit-driven companies are taking over home care, with devastating results for patients and workers. My question is this: Why is the McGuinty government so infatuated with a Conservative, cutthroat-competition model that you used to criticize and say was wrong?

Hon. George Smitherman: It shouldn't surprise individuals who are listening in that the honourable member's story hasn't evolved with the times. He's in the same place that he has always been on this issue, especially when he speaks incorrectly and makes the suggestion that in these relationships the not-for-profit provider always loses business share to a for-profit provider. The circumstances are actually dramatically opposite. In a wide variety of areas, the reverse has been true, where organizations like VON, which is active in a variety of spots in the province of Ontario, have found the opportunity for success in the new model.

We continue to see opportunities. We continue to make investments at the community level. We have every expectation, as we make greater investments, that organizations, including the one that was mentioned today, will find great opportunity for their valued mission to be continued at the community level.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister says that I'm wrong in questioning profit-driven, cutthroat competition in home care. At least my position is consistent, unlike McGuinty Liberals, who in 2004, before the election, declared that cutthroat bidding was "causing instability in the home care labour force and in the homes of patients." But after the election, the McGuinty government can't wait to endorse what the Conservatives introduced: cutthroat, profit-driven competition in home care, which reduces workers wages, benefits, pensions, and reduces the quality of care for patients. Can the McGuinty government tell us what is responsible for this sudden reversal after the election, your now infatuation with cutthroat, profit-driven competition in the provision of home care?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member himself, in the question, confided that he was consistently wrong, and he's demonstrated that as he went on. Firstly, wage rates and benefits in that sector are on the rise; they're not on the decline. I did make the assertion, and I'm prepared to back it up in the second of his three questions, that it is not appropriate to suggest that not-for-profit players are losing out at the community level when in fact, in a wide variety of circumstances, they've won back business from the for-profit sector.

We believe in creating the circumstances which allow more Ontarians to receive the benefit of home care that's delivered at home, and that's from a nurse or another provider. They don't have a label on them about whether they're private or whether they're not-for-profit. It is the individual delivering care in the home who does so in an earnest fashion and with love alongside, and we'll continue to invest in the necessary services to support our

Ontarians, including delivering more and more services to them in their home.

MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION GRANTS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I have a question for the Attorney General. Earlier this year, the House leader for the NDP, Mr. Kormos, and I sent a letter to your predecessor asking for a police investigation into the slushgate affair: 32 million tax dollars out the door, unaccounted-for, much of it to Liberal Party friends. As you know, the auditor confirmed financial misconduct and rejected every explanation given by the former Minister of Citizenship as to why the misconduct occurred. There has never been an explanation as to why the misconduct occurred or how the improper benefits were sought or bestowed.

The Auditor General, as we know, is limited in terms of what he could and could not investigate. Minister, there is a clear need for a police investigation. Will you call for one?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Indeed, I say to the Leader of the Opposition that you did—co-signed with Mr. Kormos, the member from Welland—send a letter to me. I wrote back as soon as I saw it indicating that I had no such information, that you and every other citizen would know that if you have any information, you know where to take it. I had none, and that's the end of the matter.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'm not sure the minister read the letter Mr. Kormos and I sent to his predecessor. If he did, he would know there are references in there with respect to parts IX and X of the Criminal Code that deal with property crime and fraudulent transactions in detail, including wilfully supplying inaccurate or misleading information in order to receive funds that would otherwise not be forthcoming; equally, counselling persons or groups to engage in such conduct. Part IV of the Criminal Code also speaks to issues raised by the Attorney General with respect to his report.

Because of the nature of the misconduct involved and the rejected explanations provided to the Auditor General, criminal misconduct remains a potential explanation. Minister, as Attorney General, your duties are owed to the people of Ontario, not the Liberal Party of Ontario, and I ask you to call in the police.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Let me say, clearly and unequivocally, the allegations and imputations made by that member, if he does not have evidence to back them up, are very serious. If you have evidence, take it where you and the other member know they should go. But if you do not, do not suggest to this Attorney General that a letter signed by two MPPs should cause an investigation to be commenced. Do not suggest that this Attorney General will use the office to commence political investigations because you and the member for Welland suggest it. It's time to put up or move on.

1430

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. After 46 years, Karl's Butcher and Grocery on Roncesvalles will close, and it will be followed by hundreds of others across this province unless your government changes the 2001 Food Safety and Quality Act. I ask you, Minister, will you act, and will you act expeditiously?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm very happy to get the question from the honourable member, because it provides this government with an opportunity to clarify what we have done. We have placed food quality and safety as a priority. Also, as a government, we have provided additional resources to those facilities that do process meat to access funds, so that they can comply with the new regulations that will enable them to ensure that the product they provide is provided safely to the people and to their customers.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a small company, not a big one. You are acting at the behest of big companies against small ones in this draconian measure. This small butcher shop would have to spend \$200,000 to renovate. Meanwhile, Toronto Public Health has given them a clean bill of health for 46 years. So I ask again: When will you stop butchering small business in this province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: A couple of points that I think I need to make. First of all, there is a lot of noise coming from the opposition bench, and I would remind you that you were the government that passed, in the year 2001, this act that she's addressing right now. So you need to pay some attention to your own history—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A reminder, Minister, to speak through the Chair, please.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: With respect to the issue that the honourable member has raised, I would say to her that the dollars that have been presented by the company—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order on the opposition benches, please.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I have asked that ministry officials contact this operation and indicate to them that as a government, we have set \$25 million aside to support operations—small butcher shops such as this. I have asked that folks at the ministry work with these owners to do all that we can and enable them to access the dollars we have set aside—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY AND ETHNIC NEWSPAPERS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, I watched with great interest this morning the press conference held by the coalition of

community and ethnic newspapers. There are many such newspapers in my community, and I know how much they mean to me, my friends and my neighbours. What is the status of the discussions at the government level, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton West—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop for a moment. There was an exchange of a question and answer, question and answer. There were answers given; you may not be satisfied, and you can have that discussion outside. We have a new question. The Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: These community and ethnic newspapers are very important, sir, to many Ontarians. They provide and are a great source of local news, community issues and events. The member will be aware that officials of my ministry have been meeting with these newspapers to try and find a solution, and in a supplementary, I will try to describe in more detail a proposal for the solution that we are looking at.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I thank the minister for his answer, and I agree that a proper balance has to be struck. I look forward to hearing about these details.

I was wondering if you would be able to share with us today what will be done to help these community and ethnic newspapers.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for his question, and I'm pleased to announce that I will be recommending regulatory amendments to cabinet to further expand the definition of "newspaper" for the purpose of the RST exemption.

I want to thank the member for Brampton West; the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, Mr. Colle; and the member for Davenport, Mr. Ruprecht—who have worked on this issue ceaselessly. They were there with letters and at meetings. They were not conferences in front of the cameras—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The NDP caucus, please come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —but they continued to work ceaselessly on this. The proposed regulation will be published on our website tomorrow, subject to consultation, and I'm pleased to announce it will be retroactive, so those newspapers are not affected in a negative way.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Ontarians with developmental disabilities and their families were very unhappy to read the sections in the Auditor General's report dealing with the community accommodation program. The report found repeated examples of beds in government-funded agencies remaining vacant for extended periods of time, often ranging from six to 12 months. These are

beds needed for adults and children with developmental disabilities; yet, even though the beds were empty, your ministry was still paying for them with money that agencies then used for other purposes. Why is your ministry paying agencies for beds they never filled?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me thank the Auditor General for his good recommendations and for the work he has done.

Let me say that what happened is unacceptable and we will correct it. It's unacceptable that there are parents waiting to have their loved ones in group homes and that we have beds that are empty for six to nine months. It's unacceptable, and our government will move quickly to correct that and implement a mandatory reporting of vacancies so that they are filled in a timely manner. If you can turn a bed in a hospital in less than 24 hours, I don't see why we cannot do that there.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you, Minister, for those comments. But I suppose the really important thing here is the fact that you would have known for some time through the auditor's reporting mechanism that these kinds of things were actually taking place. So I think it's really important for you to make it very clear what message you can offer to those families whose members then have been frozen out of accommodation that they are entitled to.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The message I will be giving to the families is that this government, since our election in 2003, is cleaning up the mess you left behind. That's what we're doing. So, again, my ministry will make sure—

Mr. John Yakubuski: How long is it going to take?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, I'm saying that this is unacceptable and we will move quickly to correct that. There are families waiting to have their son or daughter moved into a group home, and there are empty beds there. So, as a start, the agency will have to submit a quarterly vacancy report immediately to the ministry. Ministry staff are also developing more stringent requirements for reporting vacant beds—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

COMMUNITY COLLEGES COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. There are 17,000 part-time college staff, not to mention farm workers, who do not have the right to bargain collectively in Ontario. When will the minister and the McGuinty government put an end to that?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate receiving the question from my critic. I'm pleased to say, as the honourable member is aware, that the government intends to recog-

nize collective bargaining rights for part-time college workers as part of the broad review for collective bargaining at colleges that is under way right now. I'm pleased that Kevin Whitaker has been appointed to review the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, as it has been almost 20 years since its last review. The review will consider the existing act and recommend ways to better serve the needs of students in the college system.

1440

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The minister can easily right this wrong, this week, on this matter and consult on the rest of the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act to his heart's content.

Ontario is the only province where part-time college workers do not have the right to bargain collectively with their employer. It would be very simple for the minister to change that fact. I could easily give you a copyright for the bill I introduced last year. It's only one page.

There is nothing to consult about on this particular issue. The Supreme Court has ruled on this matter positively. Seventeen thousand workers have been waiting for a long time. Why do you delay, procrastinate and deny college workers' basic rights to bargain collectively today?

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, I'm looking forward to reviewing Mr. Whitaker's report and moving forward on it. But I find it passing strange that the honourable member talks about the bill that he put forward a short while ago and he doesn't make reference to the fact that when the NDP were in power, they introduced legislation dealing with this but never allowed it to get past second reading.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, climate change is a real issue for the constituents of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and, indeed, for all Ontarians.

Right now, leaders, scientists and experts from across the globe, along with Ontario's Minister of Energy, are gathered in Indonesia for the UN conference on climate change. I know that our government has an aggressive and integrated strategy to address climate change. We set targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and we're taking real action to reduce our environmental footprint by investing in public transit, protecting green space, reducing emissions from coal plants, promoting renewable energies and supporting research and innovation.

Why is adaptation to climate change so important?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for her question. If we all work together, we can actually make a difference and cut the greenhouse gas emissions that are affecting the future of global warming. Climate change can be less severe.

As was mentioned by the member, Ontario has a strong plan in place to cut our greenhouse gas emissions,

but the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere will affect our climate. Adaptation is about preparing for how we cope with that change. Scientific experts have told us that anticipated impacts of climate change in Ontario include a drop in the Great Lakes water levels, increased risk to the province's northern forests and species, droughts or severe floods, more invasive pests and species, and increased incidence of poor-quality days.

The recent United Nations Human Development Report highlighted the importance of twin tracking, so not only do we look to climate change but we must mitigate the effects already in our atmosphere.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Clearly, adaptation is an important element of an overall climate change strategy. I know my farm constituents certainly felt the impact of climate change this past summer. While we work hard at reducing our emissions in greening Ontario, we also need to be prepared for the impact of change on our climate in the future.

Would the minister tell this House what our government is doing to help educate the public and build the needed relationships to adapt to climate change?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Again I thank the member. The first is that we are committed to a greener Ontario. We are cutting the emissions, but we also know that we have to be prepared for the consequences that we can't avoid. That's why today our government announced the members of the expert panel on climate change—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: The panel consists of 11 leading scientists.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Toronto—Danforth, I would just ask you to take your seat, please. Allow the question to be asked and answered.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to warn the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Toronto—Danforth, I ask that you take your seat, please. The member from Toronto—Danforth, this is your last opportunity.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I have no choice. I'm going to have to name the member from Toronto—Danforth and ask him to leave the chamber. I was not looking forward to this.

Mr. Tabuns was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would remind the members in the gallery that you are guests of this chamber, and we allow you to participate but not to fully participate by clapping.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to ask that the clock be stopped for a moment, please. I'd ask all members to welcome Mr. David Turnbull from York Mills, a member of the 35th and 36th Parliaments, in the west gallery. Welcome today.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Natural Resources. The Auditor General gave a fairly damning report on your ministry in his report yesterday. I quote:

"The ministry did not have complete and current data on moose populations.... Consequently, more hunting tags were issued than the harvest guidelines recommended."

He continues: "A number of our observations suggest that ... the ministry's difficulty in meeting its goal of managing resources for sustainability is reductions in ... financial resources."

In short, the Auditor General's report underscores your government's failure to properly fund the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Since 1996, hunter and angling licensing fees have been used to directly fund fish and wildlife programs. Will you today agree to match those funds and increase funding by \$35 million to ensure the sustainability of our natural—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. It's fascinating the decimating—someone spoke a terrible word earlier about what you can do to an event. When you consider what the previous government did to MNR in terms of actually destroying a ministry, and then to have the audacity to turn around and say, "And by the way, you have to fix it"—well, we did. We put another *[inaudible]* into that ministry. And we are working with the stakeholders to make a difference.

There's no question that we have some work that needs to be done. There is a difference between what the population target is and what the estimate is. I've already requested a review of the moose tags and we will do that.

But really, it is unconscionable for that gentleman over there to suggest that since 1996 everything has been wonderful, because you know what? It hasn't been until—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: You've been the government for five years. How long are you going to keep blaming past governments? After four years, our natural resources are at risk because this government continues to deny that there's a problem.

The auditor went on to detail the sad situation you have created for our hard-working conservation officers. Despite your assurance that there are 300 COs, the

Auditor General says that there are only 190 conservation officers in the field. They are responsible for an average of 5,000 square kilometres each. That is an impossible task, particularly when they only get \$75 a week for gas and repairs. Patrols and enforcements are down; that's documented in the report.

If you will not provide more funding for the fish and wildlife program, will you at least commit to increasing direct funding for our conservation officers and to hiring more of them so we can protect our environment?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: As a matter of fact, I just met with the conservation officers in the north as well as recently here in the Legislature. I think the words I heard were, "Thank you. Thank you for restoring the funding that we didn't have before. Thank you for the \$1.6 million that enabled us to do our work. Thank you for finally recognizing the value of those officers and for protecting those officers. Thank you for increasing the canine unit."

There are things that have to be done; there's no question. There's more to be done. But the difference is, we won't leave them out of the equation as you did. We will continue to talk to them and ensure that we work together as we move forward protecting the natural resources of this province.

1450

CONTAMINATED SOIL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre des Ressources naturelles. The people of Ontario are proud of the beautiful and pristine French River, la rivière des Français. In fact, most of the river's shores from Lake Nipissing to Georgian Bay have been protected and designated as a provincial waterway park. So why is your ministry using contaminated soil from southern Ontario to cover the MNR landfill site in that area?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Tell me it's not crap.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Actually, that's not a word I use, sir. It might be one that you would use.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I've heard you use it.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: No, you haven't.

I'm not aware of the situation but I'd be more than happy to follow through on behalf of the member. Sometimes it's really far more expedient if the member would just pick up the phone. Talk to me and I'll work with you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: That may be the difference between that side and this side, as we actually do listen when the phone call comes in.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wouldn't have wanted to mention it, but there are lots of people from that area who have been calling your office and you haven't been returning the calls.

According to your ministry, contaminated soil may contain road salt which, last week, the Environmental

Commissioner's report documented is toxic to aquatic life. Instead of meeting with local residents and informing them of the nature and source of the contaminated soil, your ministry just hauled it in from southern Ontario, all the way to the French River, as if there wasn't soil still to be found in northern Ontario. I know that northern Ontario is far, but the telephone works and those people are waiting for you to call them back.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to thank the member for the question. As a matter of fact, the phone does work on this side. Pick up the phone and talk to me. You did not pick up the phone and talk to me. Instead, you thought it would be easier to do the embarrassment thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members, speak through the Chair, please.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: The fact of the matter is, I will work with you. I have a track record of doing that. I have not received those phone calls. I'm well known for returning my phone calls and I would have returned them. So I'm quite prepared to sit down with you and work to resolve this situation. All you needed to do was ask.

LAYOFFS

Mr. Bruce Crozier: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The minister knows that I, like many of my colleagues, am committed to bringing new industry to my area. The high Canadian dollar and global competition have resulted in many manufacturing jobs being lost to places like China and Mexico.

While it's important to encourage new opportunities in the Essex-Windsor region, we must be sure to take care of those who have recently lost their jobs. Over the last 30—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Opposition bench, please come to order.

Mr. Bruce Crozier:—small and medium-sized companies in the area have made employment decisions that have resulted in 1,100 employee layoffs—hard-working people who only want to be able to provide for their families.

Minister, what is our government doing to help these individuals get back on their feet and learn the skills they will need to secure new employment?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to thank the member for the question and for his concern about his community.

It's never easy to hear about plant closures or layoffs in any community, but I'm pleased to be part of a government that has successfully implemented the rapid re-employment training service in the member's community. This service provides immediate assistance to workers hit by layoffs and plant closures by responding within one hour of a public announcement of a major downsizing or closing and working with the community, the company and employees to address the situation. This

includes the development of individual action plans for each affected employee to help them return to the workforce as quickly as possible through things like job search assistance, skills upgrading, training and educational counselling, to name just a few. Through this program, the ministry was able to fund the establishment of a comprehensive adjustment committee and action centre for the Windsor-Essex area to provide a single point of entry for laid-off employees from the companies the member referred—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I've been noticing a variety of reports, over the last while, that talk about the future demand for a skilled workforce in Ontario. Despite the shift away from manufacturing in some areas, current trends in Ontario suggest that, like the rest of Canada, we will experience a need for skilled tradespeople in the years ahead.

According to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, over half of Ontario's skilled labour force is expected to retire within the next 15 years. Without a skilled labour force to meet the future employment demands of Ontario's industries, the province's prosperity, and the average Ontarian, will be impacted. What is the government doing to ensure that the province has the skilled labour necessary to support and attract investment?

Hon. John Milloy: Our government has made higher education and training a priority. Through the Reaching Higher plan, we've invested \$6.2 billion, one of the largest investments in post-secondary education and training in 40 years. In terms of the apprenticeship issue—allowing for more apprenticeships—some of the measures we have introduced include the apprenticeship training tax credit, which has been extended to January 1, 2012; expanding academic upgrading options for early high school leavers; an apprenticeship scholarship; an employers' signing bonus; an expansion of the pre-apprenticeship program; continued increased participation in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program; and combined industry-supported apprenticeship training with college education through the co-op diploma apprenticeship program. We are on target to increase the number of new apprenticeship registrants to 26,000 in 2007-08.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. The Auditor General's report reveals new information on a problem that commuters from Thornhill and neighbouring GTA-905 communities are all too well aware of: The GO train system doesn't work. The Auditor General's report states that during the audit period, 160 trains were cancelled and 3,400 were delayed. The government says its Ontario-doesn't-move-until 2020 plan" will fix GO Transit, the subway system and gridlock. The truth is that this plan only comes into effect in a meaningful way in 2011. This government

operates on the absurd notion that promising something is the same as doing it. But it's not. When will this government turn promise into action and do something about the state of gridlock rather than talk about it?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I should tell members in the House that I heard a rumour from somebody—a very reliable source—that the member wanted to be the transportation critic. But may I say that the member for Durham is very competent at that, and I think he would feel he was being pushed aside. However, that has nothing to do with the question.

May I say in my answer that you will no doubt recall, in your long history in the Conservative Party, that the previous Conservative government got completely out of public transit, totally abandoned public transit, refused to put dollars and cents into it when that was required. As a result, it fell into disrepair and went back several steps. Our government has taken several actions to ensure that it's improved, and I will certainly expand upon that in my supplementary answer.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The truth is that as this government dithers, problems facing commuters in Thornhill and throughout the GTA-905 on GO Transit and the subway get worse. Approximately 2,000 of GO Transit's 3,400 delays occurred during peak hours and affected roughly 2.6 million riders. Furthermore, expansion of service is being based on year-to-year funds from provincial, federal and municipal governments rather than on sound long-term planning based on ridership demand. Will the minister take the necessary action today to fix GO Transit, or is your plan to wait until 2011, when you can pass this province's woes on to your successor?

1500

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to say first of all that since 2003—and I know you'd like to hear this—this provincial government has invested \$4.9 billion in public transit, including \$1.8 billion in GO Transit. That's compared to the previous Conservative government abandoning GO Transit. The province is continuing to support GO Transit by committing \$457 million to its capital and operating costs. GO Transit opened four new stations in the province, for instance: East Gwillimbury, Mount Pleasant, Kennedy and Lisgar.

My friend the Minister of Health tells me that the previous Conservative government actually buried a tunnel where there was going to be public transit taking place. Our government is moving expeditiously and with cash on the table to ensure that GO Transit is improved, unlike the previous Conservative government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Health. A few minutes ago, I sent you over a copy of a letter which I wrote to you on February 16, 2007. Some nine months have gone by and we have not had a response to date, so I'm asking you here in the House.

The letter outlines serious concerns of a constituent who is in dire need of specific physiotherapy treatments. I believe you're aware of this constituent; she has met with your staff on numerous occasions. You have not responded, but ministry staff has communicated with my constituent and no resolution has been found. Are you prepared, as the minister, to intervene in this case and find a resolution for this woman who is living in pain?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the correspondence from the member, and I do apologize if an appropriate response hasn't been determined to date. I will, as a matter of immediate priority after question period, take that up and endeavour to get the honourable member an answer to the correspondence as soon as possible.

Mr. Michael Prue: My constituent is a woman who lives in considerable pain. She requires physiotherapy, but unfortunately, being the recipient of ODSP, she is not in a financial position to obtain it. She has gone to the LHINs and the LHINs have told her that there is money available, but when she goes to the hospital they tell her there is no money available. Can you tell me, is it your government's wish that an ODSP recipient, through no fault of her own, is being forced to live in pain to the point that she has now met with your government officials for the past 20 months—to no resolution at all?

Hon. George Smitherman: I haven't had a chance to examine this individual case. Obviously, with 13 million Ontarians, it would be somewhat challenging to be on top of each one of these. As I mentioned to the honourable member in my first answer, I will endeavour to get him an answer to the correspondence. That should address the other matters of content in his questions.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As the new MPP for Kitchener-Conestoga, I know the strength of the people in the Kitchener-Waterloo region and in southwestern Ontario. There are hard-working families, up-and-coming students, and seniors who have dedicated their lives to the region.

Sometimes, however, there are people who need our help. I know our government is providing this help: We're raising the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, we introduced the \$2.1-billion Ontario child benefit, and we're back in the business of affordable housing.

Would the minister responsible for housing tell me, what has your ministry done to improve affordable housing in Kitchener-Conestoga and Kitchener-Waterloo region?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me just begin by thanking the honourable member and congratulating her on her very first question in the Legislature.

I'm particularly proud of the work that we have done in the Waterloo region when it comes to affordable housing. Since 2005, under the affordable housing program signed by the McGuinty government and the previous federal government, \$27.7 million for 947 rental and

supportive housing units that have come into existence, \$2.2 million for 160 housing allowance units and \$1.2 million for 133 home ownership units. We have much more work to do, but I'm very proud of the strong voices for affordable housing that we've seen come from this member from Kitchener-Conestoga and the member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm pleased to hear the minister's response and I'm proud to be part of a government that is helping Ontarians in need, but I know, and I know that the minister knows, that there is more to do. That's why our party committed to a long-term affordable housing strategy in our re-election platform.

It seems to me that some members of this House don't seem to understand that we, as a government, are committed to building more affordable housing in Ontario. The member from Parkdale-High Park mentioned in a recent interview on Global Television that some issues were not mentioned in our throne speech. She specifically said that housing was not mentioned. I would like the minister to set the record straight and tell the members of this House and all Ontarians just what this government plans to do to provide affordable housing to those in need in our province.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm glad the member pointed out to the member from Parkdale-High Park—I too was watching Focus Ontario and nearly fell off my couch when I heard the member say that housing was not mentioned; another example of the la-la land caucus over there. They just make things up time and time again, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the member to take his seat, please.

The tone has certainly risen quite a bit in here today. Maybe it's everyone being anxious to get out of here, but I would just ask that you not use phrases that light a fire under the opposition side and bring the tenor in the House down.

Hon. Jim Watson: I know sometimes the truth hurts when it comes to the NDP, because in the speech from the throne it was clearly indicated, and I quote, "boosting the minimum wage to \$10.25 by 2010, increasing child care spaces and providing more affordable housing."

Unlike the previous government and unlike the NDP, who did virtually nothing for housing, the McGuinty government is back in the business of providing affordable housing in Ontario.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that was sent to me from Susan's delicatessen and imported gifts in Markdale.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services—Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale has been promised a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I've signed this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It bears the signatures of quite a number of the GTA/905 Healthcare Alliance, and I would like to read it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day-surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area, and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

This is an important initiative for western Mississauga. I'm pleased to support the petition, affix my signature and ask page Simon to carry it for me.

1510

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I am pleased to present a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

"Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic"—the incident in May 2007 of the death of young Damon Fewer is a case in point;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

"—repainting the crosswalk;

"—a new overhead flashing light crosswalk sign;

"—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed;

"—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone."

I am pleased to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in the community of Greenbank in the riding of Durham.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yesterday I presented a petition in support of breastfeeding, and today I'm presenting another one from a group from around Ajax. It goes:

"Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Pediatric Association and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years and beyond for optimal health; and

"Whereas many Ontario health care services lack adequate resources needed to assist women to achieve success for the recommended, well-established timeline;

"We are asking the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take a leadership role in ensuring the provision of adequate breastfeeding supports for women in Ontario by:

"1. Creating a provincial breastfeeding policy in Ontario;

"2. Initiating a process whereby all Ontario hospitals become baby-friendly as per the WHO/UNICEF guidelines;

"3. Adequately fund health-care-providing organizations to properly train all health care providers working with new and expectant mothers in hospital and community settings;

"4. Increase the number of both hospital and community-based clinics in Ontario;

"5. Fund the creation of a provincial 'centre for excellence for breastfeeding' which would serve as a training ground for professionals, a centre of research and a fully functioning clinic accessible to all women who require assistance."

Breastfeeding is a natural occurrence, but it is not easy. Women need help, and this is what these petitions are all about. I fully support and endorse them and add my signature.

REFUNDABLE CONTAINERS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I promise that this petition will not read like a novel. It's addressed to the Legislative

Assembly of Ontario and especially the Minister of the Environment. It reads as follows:

"Whereas we find lots of pop cans and beer bottles in our parks plus children's playgrounds;

"Whereas it is therefore unsafe for our children to play in these parks and playgrounds;

"Whereas many of these bottles and cans are broken and mangled, therefore causing harm and danger to our children;

"Whereas Ontarians are dumping about a billion aluminium cans worth \$27 million into landfill sites every year instead of recycling them;

"Whereas the undersigned want to see legislation passed to have deposits paid on cans and bottles, which would be returnable and therefore not found littering our parks and streets;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge and demand that the Ontario government institute a collection program that will include all pop drinks, Tetra Pak juices and can containers to be refundable in order to reduce littering and protect our environment" at the same time.

I'm delighted to sign this document because I agree with it 100%.

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas prostate specific antigen (PSA) tests are frequently used to screen patients for prostate conditions, including cancer; and

"Whereas there is currently a double standard because men usually pay to have a PSA test as part of a routine medical examination, while women have all cancer screening tests covered by OHIP; and

"Whereas for Ontario men, prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed type of cancer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the province of Ontario to review its policy on funding PSA testing for men with a view to including this as a service wholly covered by OHIP."

I have affixed my signature; I am in full support of this petition.

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, regarding the increase in the number of seats in the federal Parliament.

"Whereas the government of Canada has proposed legislation to increase the number of seats in the federal Parliament, resulting from the recent data reflecting population growth; and

"Whereas, as has become the custom with Stephen Harper's government, Ontario once again is getting the short end of Confederation's stick; and

"Whereas this legislation discriminates against Ontario electors by making their vote count for less in the House of Commons, in comparison to electors from other parts of the country, such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec; and

"Whereas this discrimination against Ontario on the part of Stephen Harper is nothing new; and

"Whereas we've seen Stephen Harper take a dismissive attitude toward our cities by failing to heed the call of Canada's mayors for 1% of the GST for municipalities; and

"Whereas the Stephen Harper government has demonstrated an apathetic attitude for the challenges the sluggish US economy and a strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government's effort in this regard; and

"Whereas this injustice hits at the very heart of democracy by creating a House of Commons where every single Canadian's vote doesn't carry the same weight;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, congratulate the Premier for undertaking his initiative."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Marisa, who is with me today.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Highway 35 Four-Laning

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

I agree with this and encourage the Liberal government to move quickly on this.

GYPSY MOTHS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a petition about protecting Ontario properties from gypsy moth infestation. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas gypsy moths are a dangerous pest because they can nest in more than 500 different native plant species; and

"Whereas professional arborists have estimated that thousands of acres in Ontario have been deforested by gypsy moths; and

"Whereas many properties in Binbrook, West Niagara, Haldimand and surrounding areas have been dramatically harmed by gypsy moths; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has previously funded a cost-shared gypsy moth spraying program;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources immediately fund a gypsy moth spraying program to assist landowners and municipalities attempting to control further gypsy moth infestation."

Beneath the signatures of Robert Rolfe and Diane Cormier, I affix mine in support.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario. It's about the universal right to health care and reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

Since I agree with this petition wholeheartedly, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

1520

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: It's important to recognize the tragic event that happened on May 22, 2007, in the village of Greenbank. The community has raised this petition, which I'm pleased to present on their behalf, which reads:

"Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

"Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

"—repainting the crosswalk;

"—a new overhead flashing-light crosswalk sign;

"—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed; and

"—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone."

I'm pleased to present this to page Nikita to present to the Chair.

LOTTERY WINNINGS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here that was drawn up by Madame Racine from Devonshire Avenue in Iroquois Falls. It has the signatures of some 119 people from the area, and it has to do with lotto winnings. I introduce that petition on behalf of Madame Racine and the people of Iroquois Falls.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with employment insurance benefits. It says, "Fairness for Ontario Workers," and it's to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion;

"Whereas the federal employment insurance program's eligibility rules are responsible for people slipping into poverty while the federal government uses the money to finance tax cuts for corporations;

"Whereas the employment insurance eligibility rules punish and discriminate against Ontario's unemployed;

"Whereas 70% of the province of Ontario workers are not eligible for employment insurance benefits; therefore, they are excluded from employment-insurance-funded training programs;

"Whereas 78% of people who lose their jobs in Toronto do not qualify for employment insurance benefits;

"Whereas a worker in Ontario has to work more hours to be eligible and also is unfairly entitled to less weeks of assistance compared to workers in other parts of Canada;

"Whereas the present employment insurance rules and criteria unfairly punish newcomers and are a major cause of poverty for immigrants;

"Whereas the Canadian Institute of Actuaries has called upon the federal government to create a new, independent body responsible for the employment insurance system modelled on the Canadian pension plan; and

"Whereas the employment insurance surplus should belong to its contributors and be managed as a social insurance program instead of a cash cow for the federal government;

"We, the undersigned, request that the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the creation of an independent arm's-length agency that would eliminate the unfairness to Ontario workers and ensure that employment insurance premiums go back to help unemployed workers and not be used to fund the federal government's tax cuts for corporations."

I know this petition has been long, but I agree with this 100%, and I sign it delightfully.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Today during question period, we had the government ask ministers questions of two separate ministries. The answers appeared to be somewhat ministerial—ministry or regulation changes within those ministries.

I believe that the announcements, or what appeared to have been announcements, should have been more appropriately made during ministerial statements. I would ask the policy of the House in reviewing this and looking to ensure that the answers that ministers are making are not policy or regulatory or governmental changes and that they're actual answers to questions and not making announcements during question period.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will take the member's point of order under advisement. We'll use this opportunity to review the Hansard for the specific questions, and I will endeavour to rule at my earliest convenience to the member.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 11, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for London—Fanshawe.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the chance and opportunity to speak in support of Bill 8. Before I start, this is the first time since the election that I'm standing to speak and support any bill or any issue.

Before I start talking about the bill, I want to thank the people of London—Fanshawe for giving me the chance and the opportunity to represent them again for the next four years.

Hon. Jim Watson: They're good people, smart people.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

It's important in this place to bring issues concerning our people in the province of Ontario. Today we're debating a very important bill, Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act, which is proposed by our Minister of Education and supported by our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, to ban trans fats from high schools. I think that's a very important initiative.

As you know, in our first mandate, our Minister of Education banned junk food from elementary schools. I had the chance back then to visit the school with the previous Minister of Education, Gerard Kennedy, when we made the announcement. It was in London, Ontario. We talked then about the importance of banning junk food from public education. It was a very important announcement back then, and that announcement, I remember, had a lot of positive feedback from the public—parents, students and teachers—because it's important to educate our kids, our students, to learn how to eat properly and healthily.

Now this year, in the second mandate, we're expanding our initiative to go to the high schools. It's also an important initiative, because as you know, the majority of our students, our kids, tend to enjoy—like everybody else—chocolate bars, chips, pop and all junk food. I think it's not appropriate for them and not healthy for them. As you know, when people eat and become obese, they become unhealthier, and when they become unhealthier, it affects their ability to study and to be able and productive in the future.

As everybody in Ontario knows, we work hard to build the future of our province, and the future cannot be built by us because we're already—I'm middle-aged and some of us are older, but we have to invest in the future of our province, in our students, our youth.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's the reality. We cannot escape from reality, member for Davenport. You know what? We've passed the era of youth. I guess now we are adults, and we have to invest in the future.

Investing in the future cannot be less than investing in our students, in our schools. Therefore, it's important for us to invest in our students by banning all junk food from high school cafeterias, by banning the vending machines that carry all the junk food, and replacing it with healthier food.

We listened to a lot of stakeholders, the people who make the food. It will affect their sales. As a matter of fact, maybe it will increase them. Also, the cost of this healthier product will be the same. There won't be any additional cost.

Educators will welcome this initiative because it will give them the chance and ability to control the students. As you know, when people eat sugar they become very hyperactive, and we'll be unable to control them. Also, when they eat a lot, they become lazy, fat and obese, and

that will affect their ability to study. So all of these initiatives are to create a good future for our students, for our province, because the future of this province depends very much on investing in our students.

1530

I think this is a great initiative. We listened to many different speakers who spoke about this issue yesterday. I was listening to my friend from the NDP Mr. Marchese when he was criticizing the bill. I don't know why. I read the bill in detail; I went through it step by step. I think there are a lot of positive issues in that bill; it's a very fundamental, important bill. We should all come out and support it, because no government in the past came forward and introduced such a bill that will affect our students, affect our future and invest in our students by creating good and healthy habits. If this bill passes, they're going to create a fundamental base of good habits for our students: to learn how to eat and be healthy—and be healthy in the future. Also, it will save our health care a huge amount of money.

Last year, the Minister of Education, with the Minister of Health Promotion—back then it was Minister Watson—came in with a good initiative in which many high schools participated, where a healthy day and a healthy meal was provided by many high schools in the province of Ontario to introduce healthy habits and healthy food.

I had the chance to go to many schools in my riding, and it was a good initiative. I went to—

Mr. Mike Colle: Name some of them. Let's hear about some of these great schools. What are the names of these schools?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, Montcalm Secondary School in my riding and Clarke Road Secondary School in my riding. They both got awards from both the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health Promotion back then. It was a great initiative, where some schools brought apples, some schools brought healthy food, juice instead of pop, and milk instead of chocolate bars. All these habits have left a great impact on many of our students.

At Clarke Road Secondary School, they said, "We want to introduce a different program," which was supported by our government, to introduce a breakfast for all the students in the morning. It was a good breakfast, a healthy breakfast. If you provide breakfast for some people who do not have the chance to eat at home because they have to come to school early, or for some reason they have no money to buy food or buy breakfast, they get a chance to sit with their colleagues, their friends, and eat, socialize and get a healthy meal—

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And they learn better.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: And they learn better. When you have a full stomach, you have an ability to learn better.

I think it's a very good initiative. This initiative back then was welcomed by many different high schools across Ontario, I believe strongly. As recommended by many different high schools, our minister introduced that bill this year, to expand it to all the schools across the

province, as supported by the government. If this bill passes, it can eliminate all the trans fats from any high school in the province of Ontario—also from the vending machines. It's very important.

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to hear about some of the schools in London, elementary schools.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Elementary schools? Most of the elementary schools, the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, are doing excellent. They're happy.

Mr. Mike Colle: Name me some in London; I don't know any.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Many different schools in my riding—St. Francis School, Wilton Grove Public School—participated in this event. And guess what? The parents were very, very happy, and the teachers were even happier because lots of chocolate bars, lots of junk food, lots of chips and all this were replaced by healthier food. Instead of giving them a pop, we give them milk; instead of giving them chips, give them—

Mr. Mike Colle: An apple.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Maybe an apple. Instead of giving them something like a burger, we give them something healthier with less fat in it—

Mr. Mike Colle: Carrots.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Yes, a carrot, an apple, juice and all this stuff we've introduced. It's a great initiative because it's very important, as I mentioned, to control the students, control their behaviour and give them less chocolate, less junk. When they become less obese, they have the ability to learn more and to be healthier.

Mr. Mike Colle: Tzatziki is good for them, right, tzatziki and tabbouleh?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: All of that is healthy food; it's very important. I was listening to the Premier the other day, and he said it doesn't mean that we're going to ban all trans fat from every market in Ontario. No, we want to start in the institutions, in the places in which we raise our students, raise our youth, to give them good habits that they can take with them in the future, which gives them the chance to be healthier and stronger. There is also less of a chance to visit hospitals, which means that the parents will be happier because their kids are less obese, more active, and they go fewer times to the hospital. It also gives them a chance to be able to study and to be—

Interjection: London Health Sciences Centre?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Of course, we have a lot of good hospitals in London and great centres which provide service to almost 1.5 million people. We have good education centres in the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College, and we have great high schools in the city of London. They do an excellent and wonderful job, especially in my riding: Montcalm school, Clarke Road and John Paul II, and many other institutions that provide good service.

I think this bill is going to help them and give them the support to build a good fundamental basis for students in the future, to make them healthier, to make them able, to make them strong and to make them fit for their future.

All of us in this place are here to be great advocates on behalf of our youth, to build a good future for our kids, a healthy future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. By the way, you look good in that chair. I wish you all the luck. Thank you again for allowing me to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I'd like to respond to the member. The action, or lack of action, by the Liberal government over the last four years is easy to talk about, actually, because back in the last term of government they promised that they would ban junk food; in fact, the record speaks that they made the statement but they never made the change. Really, virtually nothing has changed. That being said, every person in the House, I can presume, would be in favour of making sure that children have proper nutrition, following the guidelines that are set by the federal government, and improving on that.

So the argument here is about announcing things and the Premier and others being at these photo opportunities and saying things. I think when you look at the detail—and I'll be speaking here shortly—you wonder, are they actually going to deliver anything?

Mr. Marchese from Trinity–Spadina spoke yesterday. I think it's worthy, people looking up the history. He follows that file very well and disclosed how little they've actually done on the nutrition side. The early start program and the breakfast program that was begun by the grocery industries—the GIFT program, I think it's called—was done by partnership of the government, when we were government, and the grocery industry, to start these nutritional breakfasts.

I just want to see one of these promises be demonstrated in a deliverable, something that our children, our youth, our teachers, our educators, can actually take hold of and say, "Here's a promise and here's an action plan." That's what's most disappointing here: to trivialize the actions and sincerity of members here in saying one thing and having the photo op and the press release—and then waiting helplessly, thinking something's changed and, indeed, nothing's changed.

We know that type 2 diabetes is on the rise. We know that the whole issue of health care, broadly, and the nutritional relationship with that, is something that there isn't much of a plan for, that I see, not in this bill and not in anything they've said.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This bill certainly would lead one to believe that great changes are about to come. We all recognize that the obesity epidemic within our youth and our children is something that needs action. But when the Liberals link a bill that has so little in it to an issue that is so important, it kind of lets the people of Ontario down. Really, all that the bill is doing is that they now have the power to set a target for the content of trans fats. That's it. That's all.

We all know that there are lots of foods that are very unhealthy, lots of junk food out there that has no trans fat content but is still very bad for the health of our children.

So to link the two and lead the people of Ontario to believe that by passing this bill we will have healthy food in our schools is completely false. The two are related a tiny bit, but very little.

Obesity needs to be addressed, and yes, we need healthy foods in our schools, but we need way more than what this bill is trying to address. We need to ban junk food completely. We need to ban trans fats completely from what is sold in the cafeterias and vending machines of our schools, and this is not happening. This is not in this bill. Again, it's like linking two pieces that have a small link but are not there.

1540

Child obesity is a crisis. My colleague was talking about type 2 diabetes, which is also a crisis. It is so easy to make the link between the lack of physical activity, the lack of nutritious food. Often stress and poverty are directly linked to type 2 diabetes.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment. I know you'll do a wonderful job.

The member from London—Fanshawe articulated very well in his remarks that Bill 8 is a historic piece of legislation in the province of Ontario, banning trans fats.

I know when I get the opportunity to speak with Sylvia Terpstra, who's the director of education for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board, Mr. John Mackle, the director of education for the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board, and even my wife, Karan, who's the vice-principal in St. Anne's school in Peterborough—she just took over that job. She's doing a great job as vice-principal. I know she's still hard at work. She'll be there till 5 or 5:30 this evening, working with her students. When I've had the opportunity to chat with her in depth about this issue, and her fellow teaching colleagues within the separate school board of Peterborough, they're on board. They see this as a very progressive piece of legislation that is much needed in Ontario.

I took note yesterday and listened carefully to the member from Newmarket—Aurora when he made his remarks on behalf of the opposition. I rather thought that was the start of his leadership campaign. I know he's concerned because he's hearing the pitter-patter of a number of people behind him. He thinks he's going to be first out of the gate, but I could see he was taking that opportunity yesterday to articulate his leadership concerns and not really talking about this bill that is so important to Ontario.

Madam Speaker, if you just take the opportunity to look at the explanatory notes with regard to this bill, they lay out very clearly, in two paragraphs, what this legislation is intended to do. I really commend the Minister of Education and her parliamentary assistant, the member from Guelph, who has a lot of experience in dealing with school boards across this province. She knows instinctively why this bill is good for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments?

Response?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank all members from both sides who commented on my speech. I want to repeat what I said in my speech: I think this is a very important bill. I want to compare, and when we compare, we have to compare apples to apples. I listened to the member from Nickel Belt who was talking about physical activities and compared it to banning trans fats from schools, which are two different issues. The minister and the Premier were very clear on this issue: "We're banning trans fats from schools." It has nothing to do with physical activity programs. That's a totally different, separate issue altogether.

When we introduced the first bill in elementary schools, we had almost 90% to 95% voluntary participation from schools across Ontario who were participating in that program. The parents were happy and on board. And you know what? That's excellent. That's why we expanded it to high schools.

I think it's very important to start in high school—where we educate our kids about many different things—and give them the education about how to be healthier when we ban all fat and trans fat and junk food from schools and introduce good, healthy food to them. Then when they get used to it, they can continue in the future to expand that habit to their kids when they get married.

I think it's good when we will build a healthy province. That's what it's all about, building a healthy province.

Madam Speaker, you know how much health care costs us in the province. So many people are obese in this province. Obesity causes diabetes and so many different illnesses and costs health care a tremendous amount of money. We're doing it for many different reasons: first, to build a good future with healthy, able people, and also to save money for health care, to support the education system, the transportation system, the infrastructure system in Ontario.

I think it's our duty in this province and in this place to introduce good bills and good strategies to protect people in Ontario. I think the Minister of Education is doing an excellent job. That's why I'm supporting the bill and I hope everyone from both sides supports the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and again, I congratulate you on your new appointment as the Acting Speaker of the Legislature. I'm sure you'll do an excellent job. I know—your performance of the past is a predictor of the future—you'll certainly be firm and fair, which is good; actually, very firm today in question period.

That being said, I want to say at the beginning that the issue is not substantively that anyone I can respect here would be against reducing or, indeed, eliminating trans fats. I think it should be clear at the beginning of anything we say that we're supportive of the idea, the goal,

the laudable objective. Again, in the limited time I'm given, it's really more about process.

The process I'm referring to was very expertly addressed and responded to by our critic, Frank Klees, as well as by Mr. Miller, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, yesterday. I may even refer to some of his notes to make the very points that we should repeatedly inform the people of Ontario that we're dealing with a situation of government by photo ops. They have the photo op and make the announcement, but there's no substantive delivery. I will get to the point of Bill 8—many members are making the same points, so it's important to broaden the address here.

The trans fat, obesity issue, we all agree, needs a consistent and well-researched plan. Let's say it's related to health care. It's a huge piece; I understand that. Whether it's on the side of obesity—the discussion around that—which is a contributing factor, or chronic disease—that's been talked about—this particular bill is just one small part of having a proper nutrition program.

How did they look at health care? When you look at the government in 2003, in all fairness, they felt there were some things that had to be addressed—having more money to spend to fix some of the problems. So they implemented the health tax, and \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year of revenue came in to the McGuinty government from the health tax.

Is health care any better? We're hearing about the Brampton hospitals, we're hearing about hospitals in my riding, there are fewer doctors, there are fewer nurses, and yet we're paying more and getting less. This is why it consistently seems that if you drill down and study what is delivered for what we're paying, you get seriously disappointed.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't want to repeat things, but some of the members here are causing me some distraction, which is fine. What is troubling is that we're getting into a predictable routine and a predictable performance of a government in its second term, with a tone of arrogance about it. It makes an announcement that sounds good. It's got the polling support—people all support getting rid of trans fat—and other jurisdictions are doing it. They do the photo op with the Premier, the minister and other people. Mr. Marchese, from Trinity-Spadina, was there yesterday and said there was nothing in it. It was like opening up an empty lunch bag. There was nothing in the announcement. I think it's important for people to just relate promises made and promises not delivered. I don't want to be critical—it sounds so negative to point out the truth.

Here's what it says. In fairness, with your indulgence, I'm going to read the explanatory notes, and the people of Ontario will decide for themselves: "The bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating"—that's a key word—"the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria." So they're going to initiate more red tape and regulation for principals who are already buried with keeping kids in school, testing,

blah, blah, blah—all that stuff. Very few teachers I know have 20 in the elementary grades. I saw one on TV Ontario the other night, saying they haven't met that 2003 promise of having 20 or fewer in the elementary grades.

1550

This goes on to say, "The Minister may make regulations exempting from the trans fat standards any food or beverage in which the trans fat content originates exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products." Ruminant meat is actually dairy cattle. Ruminants digest in their stomachs—and milk products, which is cattle. That could be hamburgers. It could be a lot of stuff and things; who knows? I'm just saying that dairy products are again something that we're encouraging children to have for the right calcium and other nutritious elements within them. So it's this idea of saying one thing and doing another, because, really, they're exempting by regulation ruminant meat and/or dairy products.

It goes on to say, "The bill also adds a requirement for boards...." Now, the school boards are downloading—that's what they used to tell us, "downloading." They can't run what they've got now. They can't have enough special-ed resources. Kids with autism and other issues are still unresolved issues and they're adding more of these regulatory issues. They're downloading for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutrition standards set out in the regulations.

Well, they said they were going to ban junk foods. You go down the school hall and you've got the chips and the pop. It's still there. Nothing has changed. They're going to eliminate this again. Many school boards are out fundraising millions of dollars a year across the province because there's not enough money in education. Some of the money they get is from those vending companies, whether it's pop or other things by vending, and they get a share of the profits. If you're going to force the school boards to take those profit-making vending machines out of the school, give them the extra money. Fix the problem. Don't just shuffle it off, and now you've got a bunch of red tape and people running around checking lunch bags. It makes no sense.

"Power is given to the Minister of Education to create policies, guidelines and regulations governing nutritional standards for all food and beverages provided on board property, on school premises or in connection with a school-related activity." Now, they're going to have hotdog day; it will be an exemption for these special days. I think if you're really sincere about banning trans fats, give us the list, and as of this date, they can't be allowed in the school. Inform and educate parents and have a consistent implementation plan. I can't wait for the public hearings on this. The administritivia around this will cost more than the obesity program itself.

I would say that it's important now to put on the record here—I just took the time to look up some of the non-partisan comments on what trans fats are. We should all know that. What I'm charged and we're all charged

with doing is expanding our understanding of this untoward product.

Types of fats in foods: unsaturated fats, monosaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats. Then there's trans fats and there's omega 3, omega 6 and omega 9. Then there's saturated fat and there's interestified fats, and there's also fatty acids—

Hon. David Caplan: Spell it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I can spell it if the minister would like to know, because I know he has difficulty with the English language. But he's a very capable minister. He's actually here most of the time and reads the speeches that are written for him. But there's fatty acids and there's essential fatty acids as well.

Now, when you get to the one component there, the trans fat—we're trying to say that not all fats are bad for you. They say omega fats are good for you and they recommend it in eggs and other things, but the issue in one of the York boards now is that eggs have an allergy aspect to them like peanuts. Some children have allergic reactions and this whole food discussion needs to be expanded to allow boards—to help them, give them the resources to do the job to keep the schools safe for children to make sure that they have nutritious meals.

“Trans fat is the common name for a type of unsaturated fat with trans isomer fat acids. Trans fats may be monosaturated or polyunsaturated.

“Most trans fats consumed today are industrially created by partially hydrogenating plant oils, a process developed in the early 1900s” and first commercialized as the product known as Crisco. The goal of partially hydrogenating is to add hydrogen atoms to unsaturated fats, making them more saturated. These more saturated fats have a higher melting point, making them attractive for baking and extending shelf life.

Another particular class of trans fats is vaccenic acid, occurring in trace amounts in meat and dairy products from ruminants. These are the two trans fats that are excluded. It's a bit technical, so I think education is an important first step in all of this.

A very important step: depoliticizing that they're taking the lead in trans fats, because this is simply not the case. In fact, there are boards and jurisdictions in Canada and in Ontario that are already taking steps to deal with it. I think New York City has banned trans fats and given a timeline and a method for implementation. That's what I'd like to have seen here. But to leave the impression that they're banning, and tomorrow morning they're going to turn the lights on and there will be no trans fats of any sort found in the schools, is simply not the case.

This is the impression of often the McGuinty government—going back to first principles here—saying one thing and flipping the mirror around and the people are waiting for, “When is this change going to actually occur? Are there more doctors after the health tax? Do the hospitals have better budgeting?” I know Lakeridge doesn't. There are over 500,000, one million people, almost 300,000 children with no doctor. I have not seen any real, empirical ways of implementation here.

I look at the practical enforcement issues and the burdensome red tape for the teachers and other educating professionals in the schools: going around and looking in the lunch bags, finding out who baked the cookies, where did they come from, spending a lot of time researching Voortman's cookies or whatever, or even home-baked cookies: Did they use Crisco? Phoning home. Just imagine the administrivia, the trivia and stuff here, without having a concrete plan and implementation, working with all the partners.

The partners would include the children themselves. The children in older grades—we see here the pages from all over Ontario, most of them grade 7 or 8 students. Look, they want to be healthy. What do they think? Engage them. I think there was a report that was encouraged by one of the schools where they did do just that.

I'm trying to make two points: first, that we in the opposition—and the Hansard record will prove that our two speakers yesterday, Frank Klees as well as Norm Miller, made it very clear—do support the initiative here. We think it's a bit populist in the way it's being managed or communicated here, because there's really no plan. There's a framework for the minister to set up a bunch of red tape and to force school boards into doing a lot more administrivia, and yet at the end of the day I'm so disappointed. I hope I'm not disappointed again, because this whole issue deserves much more serious consideration and debate, and I hope there will be public hearings, as it's my understanding there will be.

The dangers of trans fats are becoming more widely known, thanks to the advocacy of many health care professionals. There are people in the community, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and others, who have done an admirable job of making the public aware. The federal government has also taken steps. They've had a panel that has looked at this.

We know that trans fat raises bad LDL cholesterol. Someone in my age group—all persons over 50 should be tested for having high cholesterol. There are a bunch of medications you take. I think that is very important to monitor. But I'm not a big medication person. I think that the body has response mechanisms, and once we start tinkering around with those—I'm not a pharmacist or even qualified, but my approach is that nutrition comes back into this. Looking at diet, looking at exercise: These are the fundamental pieces that should be looked at first. Lifestyle issues, of course—whether it's smoking too much, drinking too much and other kinds of things that people do. Some of these things are bad for you. Living itself could be considered bad for you, because it's dangerous: what you eat, what you drink, what you read, often, and your lifestyle choices. These are things that we should all be careful of.

In my case, I look at these things from a practical sense. Cholesterol: At my age, I should have it checked. First thing I ask the doctor for is not a prescription but if there are some recommendations on some changes in behaviours that I have. I do listen to them. This can increase the risk of high blood pressure, narrowing the

arteries, heart attack and strokes. You can't legislate against free choice. I think that there are some things here, and it includes eating. Obesity is a growing problem across all age groups. I'm almost 65 and I do take great interest in my own personal health.

1600

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Really. I still play hockey; I still ski. I stay very active. I walk every day in every week. I walk from the Union Station to here. I don't take the subway; I walk. I see other people who take the subway who should maybe be walking.

There can be no better place to encourage healthy eating than our schools. So the schools are a good place where the formation of children's thinking and their values and priorities are influenced—no question. Teaching children to eat well is one of the ways to prevent pain, suffering and shortened life span in the future. The quotation, "Let food be your medicine," is attributed to Greek physician Hippocrates, who lived about 2,500 years ago. It was good advice then; it's good advice today.

When I think of it, in my own riding, one of the issues I've dealt with on trans fat and other issues and healthy eating and obesity is the issue of eating disorders. The Ministry of Health—there should be a sub-part to this whole thing of eating disorders; it is very important. Young people—others included, but often women—have these anorexic and other types of eating disorders. I have constituents, as I'm sure some of you do, who have come to me to find out that there are no resources. In fact, many of them were sent to the United States—out of Canada, out of Ontario—for treatment. It is a tragedy that we're talking about this in the Legislature. I look to see a sophisticated, government-initiated plan that we could talk about, and there's simply no plan. There's no plan here, and that's discouraging, especially with the young pages here and the young people who may look at the Legislature to see what actually we're doing here.

I am not trying to politicize the discussion here. The Minister of Education and the Minister of Health have a long road to walk here, and these are the first few weeks and months of their mandate. Let's do what they would do with someone who had a temperature; let's take tests. Let's take the test on this. The real test of this is: Where are we going to be in 2008, 2009 and 2010? Where are the benchmarks? What are the goals? I don't see any of that here, and that's discouraging.

The background is what I've said before: not just the lack of plan for eating disorders for young women, but no plan in our hospitals that I can see generally, except arguments about, "We're going to send in a supervisor" in a P3 hospital that's smaller than originally planned, and the community is outraged. That's the proof. The proof is right there. I look at Lakeridge Health and the Oshawa hospital specifically. They have an \$8-million problem. Wrapping up this year, they have an \$8-million problem.

Yesterday, the GTA/905 Health Care Alliance was here to tell us that we're underfunded in the GTA, the

905 area, which is my constituency and others, by \$200 or \$300 per person. That's simply unfair. Look at the mortality rates in hospitals and the other information issued by CIHI, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which, by the way, has been around for eight years. They've been tracking the wait time stuff. No one wants to admit it. They've been tracking that stuff for years, not just mortality rates but also wait times themselves.

I can also say, just looking at the practical debate around health care—the eating part is important to it; I get that. We've already crossed that road and admitted that we're prepared to work with the government. But Uxbridge Cottage Hospital, which is part of Durham region geographically but partnered with Markham Stouffville Hospital, which happens to be in the Central LHIN—local health integrated network. So it's physically in the Central East LHIN but administratively is in the Central LHIN. This hospital has no anaesthesiologist. They've lost their surgeon. Their medical staff and recruitment are in a shambles because the team is falling apart. I think it has gotten worse in the last two years, and it's worse now than it was in 2003. The proof, to me, is that there are no results. I put to the people on this bill: Let's track what they say they're going to do and track to see what they've done. The proof will be in the results at the end of that time.

Thank you for my opportunity to speak on Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have listened carefully to the contribution to this debate by the member for Durham, and I'm pleased to be able to comment on some of his speech making.

Far more important is the fact that in this rotation of questions and comments, in a few minutes from now we'll be hearing from our newly elected member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Paul Miller. Even more exciting, of course, is that when the 10 minutes of questions and comments are completed, we'll be having the opportunity to listen to the inaugural speech of the new member for Nickel Belt, the NDP health critic, who brings some incredible expertise in very broad and general terms but also very specifically with respect to the subject under debate in Bill 8.

I'm very pleased that our critic Rosario Marchese, the member for Trinity-Spadina, yesterday in his lead comments in his hour on this was able to point out the fact that the bill does, in so many respects, oh so little. If there really were a concern and an effort on the part of this government to address the issue of youthful obesity and developing an environment where children learn about healthy nutrition, one would think—and it seems to me the public has an incredible appetite—that there would be a legislative structure that would ban junk food, and that would not just ban trans fats but also encourage healthy eating. I'm reminded of what Alice Waters, the restaurateur and chef, did in the United States in terms of working with schools and developing relationships with

schools and local agricultural producers, getting kids involved in understanding where food comes from and getting kids to understand that you should be eating fresh food and, more importantly, eating food grown by your neighbour. I'm looking forward to Ms. Gélinas, the member for Nickel Belt, and her comments.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much, and congratulations on your appointment as Acting Speaker. I think this is the first time since I've been here that I've been able to say, "Madam Speaker."

So, Madam Speaker, I would like to comment on what is actually in the bill. We seem to have had a decided lack of conversation about what's in the bill. First of all, the bill will ban trans fats from school cafeterias. Those could be either elementary or secondary, and the ban will apply in both of those kinds of schools. The definition will be the one that Health Canada uses for trans fats or trans-free. I'm really disappointed to hear that the member for Durham is opposed to supporting our dairy, beef and lamb farmers, because what we have exempted are those products which have naturally occurring trans fats. That is quite simply because the scientific evidence is not there that naturally occurring trans fats cause the same harm as trans fats which are industrially produced, artificially produced.

Second, the legislation will extend the existing ban on junk food in elementary vending machines to secondary. So there will be a legislated ban on junk foods in all school vending machines, and the details of how we recognize junk foods will be set out in regulation. Currently there is a guideline and we'll be working with stakeholders to refine that, to bring it in line with the new Canada Food Guide. But then, because we do understand there are other things that we need to talk about more broadly, we will be working with Heart and Stroke Canada, with dietitians and a variety of stakeholders to set up a broader regulation which will set up nutrition rules for all food available on a routine basis in—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand up and, first of all, support the bill because it is a good beginning, and also to say that there is much left to be done. I think what is really necessary is the awareness component that we need to include in a much stronger way in order to make this effective. Just banning something is almost superficial. The effect that you want from it may or may not be there. I think what we need to do is educate the kids from the time they are school-aged to the time they leave school, and perhaps we will have healthier adults. But simply to ban trans fats from all school cafeterias and vending machines will not have the effect that I think the member expects.

1610

My feeling is, as with any educational program, it's best to start with children as young as possible. They take the messages home to their parents, in fact. Who can

argue with the fact that trans fats are bad? It's a proven fact; it's medically proven. We have people in medical care because of bad diet habits, bad eating habits. What better time to start to educate adults than to do it with their children? I know that that was effective when my children were small, when they brought information home and they imposed their new ideas on us. As parents we listened because we respected what they had learned and we respected their opinion.

I think that we're moving in the right direction, but I don't think that we're moving far enough. I think that the education component of this issue is really where we're going to get our effect.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment. It's a pleasure to see you there.

This discussion on trans fats, in my humble opinion, is a no-brainer. Trans fats have been proven to be bad for anybody, especially for young children, who are developing situations of obesity. This continues into teenhood and adulthood. This creates a burden on our health system, with various physical impairments developing in younger adults.

We are constantly promoting exercise, health and sports on one hand and feeding our kids junk food on the other. This seems to be a no-win situation for our province. All vending machines except ones containing wholesome drinks that are good for our youth should be banned in our schools. This is a good first step, but it doesn't go far enough.

I myself have lost childhood friends to various problems that I'm sure could be attributed to their eating habits. Maybe if we build more sporting facilities in our province and more arenas, more gyms for our youth to exercise in and have different venues to attend, to improve their health situation, to promote sports, promote health, it would be beneficial to us as Ontarians.

There's a big problem in all of North America, from Mexico to the Canadian Arctic, a problem of obesity in our youth. It's creating such a burden on health systems throughout this whole continent that it's alarming. The numbers are alarming. It's time that we started moving in the right direction to build a healthy, strong, youthful base in all our countries which will benefit us all in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the member from Welland—always entertaining; the member from Guelph, who gave a great speech yesterday but the content wasn't quite there; the member from Burlington; and the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek for their comments. I look forward to the new members and their maiden speeches. Perhaps they'll find some content in Bill 8 to speak about.

I think what's being said here is that we're all in favour of this. It's simply a first step. There's a lot of

administration. If you look at section 4 of the bill, the regulatory section, there are seven sections specifying where the minister will make regulations. So the devil is in the details. The objective is laudable, and I'm very suspicious at the end of the day because history is the best predictor of future behaviour.

That being said, I want to extend a season's greeting and a merry Christmas to all fellow members from all sides of the House, as well as you, Madam Speaker, and the table and staff. This is a season where we should be less than critical, but it is our role to be critics—on this side, certainly. To all members, have a restful season and come back—I hope the House returns in January sometime, early January, and some of the committees will do some important work. The government has had a slow start here, only being elected in October. We never came back, and it's now December 12, so it's only a few months, and then we're going back out to our constituents again. It's at that time of year, for the next few days, that we'll be celebrating the festive season. It's my privilege to extend season's greetings. Merry Christmas, happy new year, good health to all.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Nickel Belt, for what I believe is your inaugural speech.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, Madame la présidente. I'd like to congratulate you on your new nomination as Acting Speaker. I think you look really good in that seat.

I am the new representative for the riding of Nickel Belt, the riding that had been represented by Ms. Shelley Martel. Ms. Martel worked for this Parliament for 20 years. I think she was fourth or fifth on the seniority list, at age 44. Shelley was first elected in 1987, when she was 24 years old. She served in opposition as well as on the government side, and she was Minister of Northern Development and Mines. She was a pioneer.

During our orientation for all 19 new MPPs, she was mentioned as a role model for the way that she handled committee work, and basically we were encouraged to follow her lead. During my meeting with the Integrity Commissioner, she was mentioned again as an MPP who had always been very diligent and brought a high level of integrity to everything that she did.

In our riding of Nickel Belt, she is a legend in her own time. So I'm starting this new job in the shadow of a giant. Although I have no aspirations to even try to replace her, I intend to follow her lead for the integrity, ethics and hard work that she brought to this job.

As I mentioned, Shelley Martel served our riding for 20 years, and her father, Elie Martel, for 20 years before that. I want to extend my sincere thank you to both of them for their hard work during my campaign. Shelley campaigned like it was her own campaign. She worked long hours every day and so did her father, Elie. Their wealth of experience and deep knowledge and understanding of the issues in our riding were a big asset. I compare them to having Wayne Gretzky and Mario

Lemieux on your team. Again, thank you, Elie, thank you, Shelley. I appreciate everything you did.

Nickel Belt is located around Sudbury. The Honourable Rick Bartolucci, Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, represents the riding of Sudbury. My riding, Nickel Belt, is like a big doughnut all around Sudbury. So here's my link to trans fat—no more doughnuts.

You probably know Sudbury for its mines. Actually, most of the mines are located in Nickel Belt. The riding is very large. It's about 400 kilometres from the south to the north. The south starts with Alban in the French River area, which is an area I talked a little bit about today, and it goes north, almost to the level of Timmins but a little bit to the west of it, to Foleyet, Gogama and those areas. From the east to the west it's about 200 kilometres wide, and it goes from Walden at one end to Capreol and Coniston at the other end, for those of you who are from my riding. Let me tell you that during the campaign I needed three oil changes, that's how many kilometres I covered.

Nickel Belt is home to about 3,045 First Nation people living in and off recognized First Nation reserves. We have Whitefish Lake First Nation, Wahnapiatae First Nation and Mattagami First Nation. As well, we have 2,560 Metis people who live in my riding. When one visits the First Nation communities and takes a closer look at the health and the health needs, the only thing that comes to mind is that we're treating the First Nation people in Ontario as second-class citizens. This is something that is shameful on all of us and this is something that I cannot accept, and I intend to push for change and improvement.

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Nickel Belt also is home to—42% of the population knows how to speak French.

La communauté francophone de Nickel Belt est très présente et visible. En plus d'avoir nos écoles primaires et secondaires de langue française, nous avons également le Collège Boréal, l'un des deux collèges de langue française en Ontario, et l'Université Laurentienne, ainsi que ses collèges affiliés, qui offrent une vaste gamme de programmes d'enseignement en langue française. L'ACFO du grand Sudbury est très active, ainsi que plusieurs organismes communautaires et culturels. Je souligne entre autres La Brunante, qui aura lieu au mois de février, suivie par La Nuit sur l'étang, qui aura lieu le 28 et 29 mars de cette année. Je vous invite tous à venir participer à cet événement typiquement franco-ontarien, qui dure une bonne partie de la nuit. Comme on dit par chez nous, « Passons la nuit ensemble ».

Nous avons également le Carrefour francophone qui gère tout un réseau de garderies francophones, la Slague, qui organise des spectacles et le Centre Alpha-Culturel pour l'alphabétisation. L'alphabétisme est très commun chez les francophones, étant donné que l'accès à l'éducation de langue française est quand même relativement nouveau. Je souligne également les clubs d'âge d'or, et en particulier le club de la vallée à Hanmer, le Club 50 à Chelmsford et le club d'Azilda pour leur

engagement envers la francophonie locale et la vaste gamme d'activités qu'ils organisent pour la population francophone et leurs membres.

The main industries in Nickel Belt are mining and forestry. Base metal prices right now are going through the roof, so mining is booming. This is good news for the people of Nickel Belt who work for the mines and the multitudes of businesses that support the mining sector. But we all know that mining is cyclical, and we all know that after the good times comes the drought. So we have to be prepared for that.

On the other hand, the forestry sector is at an all-time low, and right now things don't look good for the future either. The trees are still being cut and the pulp mills are still running, but all of the paper mills and the lumber mills are shutting down. Ontario is not competitive anymore. Our natural resources are being shipped out of the province, and all of the value-added transformation that takes place—all the jobs associated with the value-added transformation—is being shipped out of Ontario. That has come with massive layoffs from good-paying jobs. This is devastating to the people of northern Ontario, where hard-working families find themselves with no work and no hope in sight.

Things could be different. The government could take steps. Every day in this House our leaders talk about a new hydro rate for the businesses of northern Ontario. That would make a big change. There are concrete steps this government could take that would make life a lot easier for the people of Nickel Belt and northern Ontario.

I started my career as a physiotherapist in a hospital in Sudbury. At the time it was called Laurentian Hospital. It has now been amalgamated and is part of the Sudbury Regional Hospital. Working as a physiotherapist gave me a front-row seat to the challenges and hurdles that people with disabilities have to face. I provided physiotherapy services to a lot of people who became disabled and helped them regain their lives, their independence, their dignity. But I soon realized that there were a lot of hurdles that were placed in front of them by government and by society's hurdles. The bureaucracy made things really hard for people with disabilities, and sometimes insurmountable.

A lot of people with severe disabilities depend on ODSP, the Ontario disability support program. I cannot tell you strongly enough that the level of income of people on the Ontario disability support program is not sufficient. Those people are disabled. They are forced to live in poverty and they are forced to depend on charity to survive. This is shameful for a province like Ontario that has too much. It is despicable and unacceptable. Things have to change. ODSP payments need to increase to include the cost of the healthy food basket as calculated by health units throughout Ontario. It also needs to take into account the real cost of accommodation so those people have enough money to pay rent, then have a premium for living allowance and then index it to the cost of living. It is not acceptable to have people with severe disabilities living in poverty in a province like Ontario.

On December 3, our first day in this House, we celebrated the International Day of the Disabled Person. Wouldn't it be a real celebration if we can make real changes to the ODSP? This is something that they would celebrate for a long time.

After working as a physiotherapist, I went on to do a master's degree in business administration. Up until October 10, the last election, I was the executive director for our local community health centre, le centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury. During my years as a front-line health care worker and as an administrator, I developed a pretty good understanding of how our health care system works. One of my personal heroes is Tommy Douglas, the founder of medicare. Like millions of Canadians, I support the value behind our public health care system. Some of the Conservative and Liberal members are putting forward ideas that erode the public nature of our health care system, and it is not acceptable.

Yes, there is a link between a private, for-profit hospital and poor levels of health and poor levels of care. Hospitals like Brampton and the mental health hospital are two examples where they're having a lot of problems maintaining quality health care, and it is directly linked to the fact that they are private, for-profit hospitals. This has to stop.

Of course, I am aware of the serious problems and challenges in our health care system, as well as the health and social justice challenges that we face in Ontario, but solutions do exist. All that is needed is the political will to stand up to those who want to make a profit on the backs of the people of Ontario who are sick. This is not acceptable. Solutions exist. We must take the route of the public system.

Un de mes principaux motivateurs pour devenir députée est mon désir d'améliorer la santé de mes concitoyens et concitoyennes.

I am interested in enhancing the health and well-being of all Ontarians. I believe that the development of a comprehensive social policy is the right first step in building a healthier and more equitable province. It must build on the various social and environmental factors that contribute to poor health. We need to refocus our energy on preventing illness and promoting health. This can be done by addressing the several key social determinants of health, such as poverty, income distribution and education. Often things that have nothing to do with our health care system will help keep the people of Ontario healthy. Only by linking social policy, economic policy and resource allocation to a vision of health and well-being will we see the types of changes needed to achieve my goal of enhancing health and well-being for all Ontarians, and this is what I'm here to do.

We already have some of those tools. I already talked about the Ontario nutritional food basket. This info is already being collected by all of the health units in Ontario, but yet it is not part of our action plan on poverty illness reduction when it should be.

The NDP has put forward Smile Ontario. For sure the time is long overdue to bring dental and oral health

services to all Ontarians, not just those with insurance or money. Dental and oral health services have to be part of the continuum of primary health care services. We have to include a holistic and preventive approach to dental and oral health, not just the emergency services that are presently available to people on Ontario Works or ODSP. Treatment after the fact is not enough. Every child in Ontario should have access to preventive care, and everybody who doesn't have coverage should have access. I still don't understand to this day why our mouths and teeth were excluded from medicare. That makes no sense. This has to be reversed. The NDP had a plan: Smile Ontario. The solutions are there. Let's move forward.

In order for all Ontarians to be healthy and productive, we need to support our newcomers to Ontario and eliminate the discriminatory and counterproductive three-month OHIP waiting period for landed immigrants. To force immigrants to forgo routine preventive care is not in the interest of a productive economy, a stable health care system or a societal equality agenda. I know that one of the first bills that this government brought forward was to eliminate the three-month waiting period for the people serving in the armed forces, but this is not enough. There are lots of groups in Ontario that are still facing the three-month waiting period. This is not the way we should do things in Ontario.

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When we talk about quality health care and support, we need to recognize the role that government plays. Community participation in governance of health care organizations contributes to more responsive services and better health outcomes. I would add to this that Ontario needs a complete network of community health centres that are community-governed, not-for-profit organizations to serve all of the people of Ontario.

My community health centre ran a homeless clinic called the Corner Clinic, Clinique du coin. I credit the wisdom and hard work of one of our health promoters, Mrs. Lorraine LeBlanc, for starting this program. Ten years ago, people did not know that there were homeless in Sudbury. But they were there, and she knew they were there. So she started a program on the porch of the soup kitchen in Sudbury, and started treating people who otherwise had nowhere else to go. This grew into the Corner Clinic.

Sometimes, when I wonder what really motivated me to become an MPP, I remember the quote that one of our homeless clients told me. He said, "You are going there for us. Don't forget the little people that don't have a voice, because this is why we want you to go there." So I'll make sure that I remember this every single day that I come into this House, to give a voice to the little people that don't have a voice.

I live in the north because I choose to live in the north. It is a choice that is right for me and for my family. I intend to represent the people of Ontario to the best of my ability. And I will always have an interest in the issues that affect and touch the residents of northern Ontario.

Anyone who has been in the health care business for as long as I have realizes that our health is both personal and political. I decided to run in my riding for these reasons. I believe that much can be accomplished at the personal and community level to keep oneself and the community healthy, but at the same time, I realized that politicians have a role to play to keep people in the community healthy. This is what I'm here to do. I want to make sure that the serious hurdles and challenges that our health care system in Ontario faces will be met by public solutions supported by sound public policy.

In closing, I wish everyone health for the coming year and a happy holiday season. J'aimerais souhaiter mes meilleurs vœux à tous ceux de mon comté et bonne santé pour l'année qui s'en vient.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jim Watson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Congratulations to you on occupying the Chair.

Félicitations à la nouvelle députée de Nickel Belt pour son premier discours.

It's my pleasure to congratulate the member for Nickel Belt on her maiden speech.

I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act. I had the pleasure for two and a half years of being the Minister of Health Promotion, and I worked closely with the Ministers of Agriculture and Education on putting together a comprehensive plan that would deal with the ever-increasing challenge of obesity that we're facing in our society. There's been a 300% increase in obesity rates amongst children in the last 15 years, according to Stats Canada. Think about that for a minute: a 300% increase in obesity rates amongst children. We know what that is going to mean to the health care system in terms of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and certain forms of cancer. That's why it's incumbent upon the government to work in partnership with parents, school board officials and students themselves, to encourage young people to eat healthy.

I know our pages here, if they had a choice between spending the dollar in their pocket on a chocolate bar or an apple, I suspect they'd do what I did and probably take the chocolate bar. That's why we have to take some of the temptation away from kids, and that's why we got rid of junk food in vending machines in elementary schools and we're going to move it forward to high schools. Schools in my riding like J.H. Putman Public School and Frank Ryan Catholic Senior Elementary School, which were recipients of the healthy school recognition program, are leading the way in encouraging other schools to become healthy places to live, to work and to learn.

I very much look forward to the passage of this bill. It's going to affect high schools, which I think is a good thing, and it is also going to supplement some of the good work that has been done in the past in health promotion, agriculture and other ministries, so that we can encourage healthy eating in the province of Ontario.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Madam Speaker, I'll echo the sentiments on your appointment that have already been directed to you this evening. I also have to say how nice it is to have Madam Speaker here.

I want to compliment the member from Nickel Belt on her inaugural remarks. I think her commitment to the ideals that have prompted her to make the decision to enter public office is very clear.

In making a few comments on Bill 8, I'm somewhat torn about the fact that it seems that after so many others, particularly in the private sector and particularly in the food industry, have recognized the issue around trans fats, this government seems to be coming to the table, if I might use that phrase, rather late in this public conversation. I suppose it's better to look at trans fats late rather than never; however, I think that people in the community are generally way ahead of them.

The question of this being, or that this should be, part of a very much broader conversation is, I think, really the important issue. Parents need to have a sense of their responsibility in providing for their children in a way that gives them the sense of what is a healthy lifestyle and what are healthy lifestyle choices. Obviously there is a role for the school, but it is really parents.

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member for Nickel Belt has demonstrated very clearly that she is going to be a formidable force in this Legislature, and I look forward to working with her over the course of the next four years and hopefully the four years after that, and who knows?

The minister across the way talks about youngsters making choices. Well, here's the choice that youngsters, and even adults, make between healthy food—a raw carrot—or, dare I say it, a Crispy Crunch or a Mars bar.

Page, take these Crispy Crunch and Mars bars over to Minister Watson. Come on up here. Let's go; we've got a shortage of time. Over to Minister Watson, and see what he does with them. There's your choice.

Look, the message from the member for Nickel Belt was very clear. You can't talk about nutrition and health without talking about poverty. You can't talk about nutrition and health without talking about adequate housing. You can't talk about nutrition and health without talking about people having real jobs with real incomes; jobs that are safe, where they have some control over the safety of their jobs. You can't talk about health without talking about education and ensuring that young people and adolescents have access to quality education. That's where this legislation falls short, because it is oh, so piecemeal.

The reality is that it bans trans fats, but the bill does nothing to ensure that, as an integral part of the elementary and secondary school systems, young people are learning and practising good eating habits; that they're eating fresh food—fresh fruit and vegetables—grown within close proximity to where they're located; that they're eating in a school cafeteria and taking those good eating habits home with them to sustain them in their own right and to educate their families about them. This bill fails miserably. Ms. Gélinas, the member for Nickel

Belt, has offered solutions. This government would be well advised to listen and adhere to them.

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Mr. Joe Dickson: Madam Speaker, it's a pleasure to wish you well again.

I'm very pleased to hear the honourable member from Nickel Belt. She spoke well, she spoke eloquently, and it's a pleasure to be sitting so close to her while she does that.

In Ajax, Ontario, we have an unusual situation. We have the second-largest secondary school in the country. When you put both Notre Dame and J. Clarke Richardson schools under the one roof, which they are, you have some 3,600 adolescents. We can talk gibberish all day long, but let's just focus for one second on the research, and the research is that the rate of obesity in children has tripled over the past 25 years. The most obese children become overweight adults, putting them at a higher risk for diabetes and heart disease. Sixty per cent of Ontario adults and 28% of children are overweight and obese. That translates, in this one school alone, to some 908 students who qualify as overweight and obese.

We fully support Bill 8. It's time we get on and get the job done, and I'm willing to stay until midnight because, as they say, "Let's work."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank the members who have said kind words about me and my inaugural speech. It is a kind of nerve-racking moment, but thank you for your kind comments.

Coming back to Bill 8, the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act: If you have listened to my inaugural speech, you can't help but see the link between the different determinants of health toward the healthy schools that we are trying to achieve. Children who live in poverty, children who go to school hungry because there are no healthy foods, never mind no food in the house to eat before they go to school, are not going to make healthy choices because they cannot afford to make healthy choices. I agree that obesity is an epidemic. This government, this House, has to act. We all have a responsibility toward our children, but Bill 8 is way too small. It's such a tiny step that I can't believe we are spending that many hours talking about it.

We should be talking about the real issue: that a lot of children in Ontario live in poverty. Ontario is the child poverty capital. How could that happen? And Toronto happens to be the epicentre of this poverty crisis. We're talking about setting guidelines for trans fats; oh, my God, how disconnected could we be from reality? The children in Ontario need to be living above the poverty line—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So they can afford healthy food.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So they can afford healthy food, absolutely. This is not going to do anything to help achieve that. Yes, the children who live in Ontario should have access to healthy foods in their schools. This bill is

not going to do that. It takes a tiny step—way too small for the long road ahead.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Avec la Loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation, l'Ontario prend des mesures pour faire des écoles des lieux plus sains d'apprentissage en éliminant les gras trans du menu des cafétérias scolaires.

La santé de nos jeunes est trop précieuse pour qu'on la mette à risque. Les gras trans n'ont pas de place dans les écoles et nous devons agir dès maintenant.

Le projet de loi qui sera présenté demain permettra d'éliminer les gras trans du menu des cafétérias et des machines distributrices dans les écoles. Il mise sur les mesures déjà prises contre la malbouffe dans les écoles élémentaires et les 20 minutes d'exercice quotidien.

Les gras trans se retrouvent bien souvent dans les frites, certains biscuits et d'autres aliments de cafétéria. Ces huiles traitées peuvent contribuer à l'obésité infantile. Au cours des 25 dernières années, le taux d'obésité chez les enfants a triplé. La plupart des enfants obèses deviennent des adultes qui ont un surplus de poids, ce qui les place dans une catégorie de risque élevé pour devenir diabétique et cardiaque.

La réduction de la consommation des gras trans traités pourrait permettre de sauver des vies et d'économiser bien des dollars en soins de santé.

Madam Speaker, I would, with your permission as well, like to address some particular remarks on a number of different fronts, speaking of course in a number of different capacities, not only as the MPP for the great riding of Etobicoke North but also a father, as a physician, and of course as a citizen of Ontario.

I hope with the time remaining—eight minutes and counting—that I'll be able to address some remarks in a number of different areas. They are coronary artery disease, risk factors, diabetes, the treatment targets that are changing and evolving according to our advancing scientific understanding, waist measurement—as in one's belly measurement—as the new vital sign, and some commentaries in terms of the ethnocultural focus or the ethnocultural bias in all of these particular areas.

The thing to mention at the outset, hopefully to set some context for, I think, the very commendable and perhaps overdue ban of trans fats in our school system, is the continued burden of coronary artery disease, or plugging up of blood vessels or heart disease—or atherosclerosis, as we physicians would call it. To this day, this remains the number one killer in Canada.

I have to tell you that we used to think that an individual had to be over the age of 40, and considerably over the age of 40, to actually develop, manifest, show, declare symptoms of coronary artery disease—typically death, heart attack, chest pain, shortness of breath, compromise on exercise, and of course the list goes on. What we're learning now in medical science is that, unfortunately, the threshold for manifesting these diseases is all the time being lowered. It's no longer over age 40, no longer even over age 35, but younger and younger. There

are now, for example, individuals in their teens who are being admitted to coronary care units in Canada for vascular procedures, for blood vessel bypass surgery and so on.

This is, I think, just a signal to us of an epidemic, of an entire wave that is coming forward, and of course that's why it's very important to support this ban on trans fats.

Mention has been made about the elevation of the bad, evil cholesterol, LDL, and the diminishment or the decrease of the good HDL cholesterol. That is, of course, something that we as physicians struggle with on a regular basis, whether it's involving diet and exercise or the prescription of appropriate medications and appropriate follow-up. I must say that the number of people who could benefit from this wise advice, from being more stringent and more rigorous in applying the science to their day-to-day affairs, is very small, just a subset, a handful of the number of individuals who could actually benefit. That's why I think it's extremely intelligent and, as I say, long overdue and welcome that the McGuinty government begins attempting to remedy this situation, this long-term development of these areas at source—at source, of course, being our school systems.

We have spoken about risk factors. If I might introduce a term that perhaps many of my colleagues here may not be too familiar with, that is something that is circulating now in medical circles, what we call the cardiometabolic syndrome, or CMS. Essentially, it is about the evil of obesity, of visceral obesity or central obesity, abdominal obesity. It's basically talking about how an individual who is overweight, especially if it's over time, of long duration, beginning in early childhood, essentially predisposes themselves over time to a long list, a long cluster of diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, even things like Alzheimer's, kidney disease, and of course the list goes on.

What's important to understand, as I mentioned in my remarks earlier in French, is that we no longer have to wait for the typically middle-aged individual—say, 40-plus—to develop and show these conditions. That's why we must become proactive. That's why we must support this ban of trans fats at the earliest stage as possible.

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I'll give you a specific example. In Canada, as of this moment, as we speak, something on the order of about three million Canadians have diagnosable diabetes by criteria, by doctor's criteria, by blood test. The problem is, only about half of them have actually had it diagnosed. There's this huge group of individuals who are entirely oblivious, who essentially haven't been alerted to this fact. That is a huge pool of individuals who are moving through a system who are allowing themselves to have a lot of end organ damage, as we say: kidney damage, heart damage, eye damage and so on. That's why we need to sound the alarm and sound this alert. I think that as we ban trans fats, as we put forward this messaging, as we perhaps contribute to the Ontario conversation on health and health promotion, it's very im-

portant that we hopefully benefit from some of these remarks contextualized.

That's speaking about diagnosable diabetes. Similarly, a new term that is still new to fellow physician colleagues is what we call pre-diabetes, or diabetes in training. That is, of course, those individuals, often beginning in childhood, who develop the bad behaviours or the misbehaviours that predispose them over time: excess stress, lack of physical activity, poor dietary choices, continued consumption of trans fats and the developing of that ever-present waistline. That group of patients who are pre-diabetic actually exceeds, even, the number who have diabetes, probably by a factor of two. What I mean is, there's probably something on the order of about four to five million Canadians who are, as of this moment now, pre-diabetic, having basically diabetes in training, which will develop over time unless we sound that alert. That's why, very simply, things like—not even a blood test measurement or a measurement of some of the more fancy biomarkers or blood tests that we have, but even something as simple as measuring one's waistline—measuring one's waist is considered now the new vital sign, along with things like respiratory rate or blood pressure and pulse. But that alone, the measurement of abdominal obesity itself—which, by the way, is kind of an indication of perhaps how many trans fats you've had over your lifetime—is itself a very powerful marker for downstream risk and downstream disease. I think, as I say, as we move forward with Bill 8 here, as we move forward with this important legislation and add to and enhance and energize and juice up the Canadian conversation on health and health promotion, hopefully we'll be able to benefit from these particular aspects.

Lastly, in closing I would also like to bring to attention some of the very important work that's being done by a number of institutions, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, the Canadian Diabetes Association, the south Asian chapter of the Canadian Diabetes Association, and so on. That is—particularly remarks that are appropriate to Ontario, given the diverse multicultural ethnocultural populations that we have here in Ontario and here in this Legislature—that certain populations are particularly prone to developing these conditions. Of course, there's a whole long list of reasons why, whether it is earlier diabetes or a predisposition to having the ill effects of trans fats, earlier development of obesity and so on. I would simply encourage all the individuals and various institutions and school communities and school boards listening that, as we move forward with this very important initiative on banning trans fats—for which we salute Minister Wynne, the Minister of Education—that it also be part of a larger context of health promotion on all these different fronts: coronary artery disease, awareness of risk factors, the ever-present burden of diabetes, the target changes, waist measurement as a new vital sign and, of course, focusing in on, particularly important to Ontario in the Ontario context, the ethnocultural milieu. Merci, Madame la présidente.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Merci. Questions and comments? The member for Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I listened, of course, to the member for Etobicoke North. I didn't find his comments particularly pleasant. I became very self-conscious at several points, but I listened, indeed, very carefully. His comments were downright depressing, but I accept them very much in the manner that they were intended. Indeed, the member from Etobicoke North, Dr. Qaadri, has the capacity, because of his background, to make a significant contribution to this whole debate, and I wish he had used the whole 20 minutes available to him because he was at the diagnostic stage—if I may borrow medical language—but then he wasn't at the, dare I say it, treatment stage. He told me that I should be concerned about the girth that I have acquired, and I accept his admonition in that regard. Several other members of this Legislature and I exchanged glances with each other, in mutual acknowledgment.

The interesting thing is that the Minister of Finance, the other day when he was ranting on about the supply bill, made reference to this bill, applauded it and said he wished that there was with a bill like this, that there was a ban on trans fats in school when he was a kid, and I don't agree with him. I had no problem in elementary or high school; I was skinny in elementary and high school. I only got fat here at the Legislature. So from my personal perspective, if we need a ban on trans fats, it should be here at Queen's Park. But I suppose one has to understand that for some individuals, because the doctor made it very, very clear that the most dangerous profile is the young person who acquires an overweight profile and who carries it with himself or herself into their teenage and then adult years. So dare I say, Doctor, that having only become fat after reaching the age of 40, I have somewhat more hope than perhaps some of my colleagues here.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thoroughly enjoyed the comments of my colleague from Etobicoke North, whose remarks were, as always, not only delivered in both languages but were interesting to listen to for their own sake.

To follow up on the comments of my colleague for—what is it, Peter? Niagara Centre?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Welland.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Welland. He was asking, "What's the next step in this?" In our house, we saw that earlier in the spring. When you see our Christmas card with our cat, Obi-Wan—Obi-Wan was diagnosed with diabetes. It was exactly the same syndrome that we're looking at here. We discovered that, in fact, it was high-fat cat food and his lifestyle. So we had to get a grip on his diet. We had to reduce it. We got him back to a high-fibre diet, and he's on insulin and indeed, his diabetes is very much under control. But this points out to all of us how important it is to get rid of those trans fats because as an animal, he would just dive right in and he would eat the junkiest cat food that he possibly could. We face, as

adults, pretty of the same responsibility with our children. It tastes good, it feels good, your peers are doing it—

Mr. Mike Colle: Are you talking about cat food?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm talking about junk food for kids, say I to my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. I haven't actually tried cat food.

This is part of our responsibility as legislators: We have to lead by example. In our family, part of that example was brought home when we discovered that Obi-Wan had diabetes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I appreciate this opportunity to respond briefly to the member for Etobicoke North, and I want to thank and congratulate him for bringing his professional expertise forward this afternoon and entering into this debate on Bill 8.

It's hard to believe, but it's two months ago—more than two months ago, actually; two months and two days—since the people of Ontario went to the polls on October 10. I recall with surprise the comments of the Premier on the Global TV program Focus Ontario, right after the election, when he indicated he wasn't sure whether or not the House would be called back into session before Christmas; the decision had not yet been made. In other words, "We just got re-elected. We're going to put our feet up, take our time and relax. We wouldn't want to go right back to work. After all, we've had a tough campaign, and the people of Ontario have rewarded us with a second majority. So everything is great. Don't worry; be happy."

1700

So here we are today. Of course, we're debating Bill 8, which is an important symbolic statement that the government's making for sure to try to discourage kids from eating unhealthy foods in schools and try to discourage schools from allowing those kinds of foods to be sold in schools. But when you look at the exemptions, when you consider the fact that special days are going to be designated—in my kids' school I think they have pizza every week. Once a week they have pizza day. Is that going to be an exemption? I suspect it is, according to the bill.

The fact is, this bill makes an important symbolic statement, but really doesn't do what the government is selling it as doing as such, I'm afraid to say. I think that in spite of the fact that we have our best efforts going forward to try to discourage unhealthy foods in our schools, this bill isn't going to do what the government would lead to us believe. Again, you sort of wonder what the next four years are going to be like if this is the highest priority on the government's agenda. When we come back after the election campaign, we're only sitting for two and a half weeks and here we are debating a bill that's really symbolism and probably should be dealt with at private members' hour as opposed to taking up the time of the Legislature on a Wednesday afternoon.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say it was a wonderful presentation by my colleague across the floor. It was very enlightening and well thought out.

However, I think one of our biggest problems is we're a product of our own doing. For instance, if you take Halloween—and I'm not a party-pooper, but on Halloween we give out, right across our country, tons of candies full of trans fats to our kids. Maybe this society should start moving in the direction of giving out healthy treats on Halloween night to our kids. I firmly believe I was guilty of handing out treats myself this year, and maybe I should take a look at the things I'm feeding my neighbours' kids. Maybe I should look at healthier products that are out there that do the same thing. Splenda is an amazing contribution to the sugar situation. It doesn't do the harm that some of these other sugars may do. There are other products that could be good to make things sweet that kids can enjoy that aren't going to hurt them.

We talk about banning it in schools. We talk about taking out vending machines in schools and theatres and all the things that are fun, but I think we could replace all those types of products with other products that aren't as damaging. I really believe we could move in that direction to the point where kids would not miss it; they would be happy with the new product lines that are coming out. I know in countries like Sweden, Norway and Finland, they have these products that they give out to their kids on traditional holidays. The kids are fitter. They have a better system, and I believe that we could start there—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Response?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'd like to thank my colleagues from Mississauga–Streetsville, Wellington–Halton Hills and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

I think all of us can embrace this particular legislation on the ban of trans fats and understand that it's part of a larger initiative to make our schools healthy, to make our schools places where people will develop good habits over time, whether it's with regard to physical activity or to socialization and interaction with a broad cross-section of the world, as well as healthy eating habits and really lifelong habits that will serve them well over time and hopefully contribute to the betterment of Ontario society.

I'd like to thank my colleague as well from Niagara Centre and, indeed, all my colleagues for their very kind remarks, because I think this is certainly an issue—children's health, the health of Ontarians, the health of families over time—that all of us can support and, hopefully, in a reasonably non-partisan manner move forward to steady passage of this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm pleased to be able to have a modest 20-minute opportunity to participate in this debate. Look, let's be fair to the minister. At the very least, she's put this bill forward so there can be this discussion. While the bill is going to be criticized from all quarters, just wait until it goes into committee. You haven't heard nothing yet. The paucity of substance is

going to be exposed in a very dramatic way. But the bill does generate this debate.

I'm grateful to our health critic, the member for Nickel Belt, because she brings to this debate, as she will to others over the course of this Parliament, insights from a professional health treatment person who has a strong understanding and whose approach to health care is a progressive one. It's not traditional by any sense of the word, but it's progressive. But being progressive doesn't mean that it's new.

I recall any number of biographies of Dr. Norman Bethune, the great Canadian. One of the many things that Bethune is credited for is identifying the relationship between poverty and disease, particularly tuberculosis. People were being sent to sanatoriums; the proverbial iron lung. This is in the 20th century. It's remarkable that it was well into the 20th century before Dr. Bethune understood that it was people who came from industrial areas that used soft coal—the air was full of discharges from industrial pipe stacks—the workers in those environments, who disproportionately suffered far greater incidence of lung disease and tuberculosis. He, Dr. Norman Bethune, a great Canadian, understood and identified for the first time, in the first half of the 20th century, the relationship between these two things. That was a progressive, enlightened approach to health care, because once you understand that, you understand preventive health care.

That's what our member for Nickel Belt—as I say, she's a progressive, but the progressive perspective of health care is not necessarily a new one. There's a long tradition of progressive health care that dates back in Canada—and I cite Dr. Norman Bethune.

As I indicated earlier in the brief two minutes, it is impossible for us to isolate the issue of health and youthful child and adolescent obesity from issues like poverty. It's an inescapable conclusion and observation that a family with low income or no income is hard-pressed to be selective about purchasing the foodstuffs that allow them to eat healthfully: fresh vegetables, fresh fruit. I emphasize those because I come from the Niagara region. Heck, most of Ontario has agriculture as a core industry, but I come from a part of the country that's blessed with land that produces good-quality fruits and vegetables, and again, because of greenhousing and the methods of storage available, almost year-round.

To be fair to the farmers, let's make it very clear: Even with what many perceive as costly food items, the farmers are still very much subsidizing the consumer in this province.

Poor folk can, too, be forced to live on processed foods that in and of themselves are, sadly, far less tasty, and also not only far less nutritious but actually have content that contributes to ill health. Our member for Nickel Belt has been most helpful to me in explaining that trans fats are the types of fats used in processed foods. Those trans fats are not, in and of themselves, causing obesity, but are an integral element of processed foods that do contribute to obesity, because you're talk-

ing about loads of gratuitous calories—junk food. But also, the impact of trans fats on the body is the major contribution to cardiovascular disorders. Dr. Qaadri, the member for Etobicoke North, was speaking to that just a few minutes ago.

So here we are with a bill that bans trans fats in the cafeteria and then makes some mention, without being anywhere near that complete, with respect to vending machines in the school. And the observation made by careful readers of this legislation is that while the cafeteria may not contain food prepared with trans fats, there's nothing in the bill that's going to reduce—never mind abolish or eliminate—junk foods in the cafeteria; it's just that they won't be made with trans fats. Do you understand what I'm saying? The french fries are going to be fried in a frying oil that doesn't contain trans fats. Trust me, that doesn't make french fries any healthier for you. The breaded processed food and the processed food which contain all sorts of elements, chemicals amongst other things—artificial flavouring—none of which can be good for you, is still going to be served in that elementary or high school cafeteria, except that it's not going to be fried in trans fat oils.

1710

The mayonnaise on the sandwich is going to be mayonnaise with all of the gratuitous, high-calorie content—with a wonderful taste, of course. And nothing is as good as homemade mayonnaise, to be fair. I mean, the dried egg yolks and other food processing elements that are in the store-bought mayonnaise—although Hellmann's is surely the best. But the mayonnaise in the school cafeteria is not going to be made with trans fat oils. So there won't be trans fats, but we'll simply see the gratuitous, high-calorie content of mayonnaise. So this is really bothersome.

The other element that's surely missing here—because, look, one would be far less frustrated and exasperated if the government would simply acknowledge that this is the tiniest, teeniest of steps, rather than trying to declare that somehow this is a major breakthrough in encouraging healthy eating by our young people, or anybody else; far from it. As a matter of fact, what's sad and dangerous about this—this bill is dangerous, and I'll tell you why. If we fixate on trans fats and leave the impression that if you don't eat foods made with trans fats, then you're fine, well, El Gordo can just gobble down big bags of ripple chips all night as long as the label says "No trans fats," thinking, "Oh that's just fine." But El Gordo would be sadly mistaken. That's the danger of the bill.

Look what the high-priced advertising firms are doing with food packaging now. You see it, don't you? No trans fats. I see that "No trans fats" on those Vachon cakes filled with the fake cream, the ones that stay fresh for two years in the plastic. Surely there's something wrong with food that doesn't spoil. Think about that. It's very scary. I don't buy them anymore, but I've come across Vachon cakes that have an expiry date of 2003 in my apartment, hidden away in various places, and I can't

help myself; they're still edible. But surely there's something wrong with food that stays edible for four years in a package. That causes me great concern.

I just read a fascinating biography of Alice Waters, the American cook/restaurateur at Chez Panisse, in the San Francisco Bay area. It was a wonderful restaurant—apparently it's still there—that acquired celebrity status. What she did in terms of American restaurant food preparation is she brought that European movement of using food—she wanted those eggs that she used in her restaurant to still be warm from the chicken's body when she broke them for cooking. She wanted the carrots, the vegetables, to still smell of the fields that they were picked from. She didn't want fruits and vegetables that were transported across the continent. So in this San Francisco-area restaurant, she developed this philosophy about eating. But then what was the complement? Like down in Niagara, small agricultural producers began occupying that niche production of producing very high-quality, specific products: broccoli, asparagus, what have you—a very small volume, with the farmer getting a good return on his or her work because people are prepared to pay for that, but fresh and local. So her work revived some dying agricultural communities around any number of urban centres in North America because of the demand for fresh local produce.

So here we are. Why don't we have from this—as they would call themselves—oh, so enlightened government a piece of legislation that is holistic, as Ms. Gélinas has told us, that would not only ban dangerous and inappropriate foods but also teach and encourage good eating habits?

I say good eating habits include things like eating the produce that is manufactured or grown by the farmers around you. That's smart. It's smart nutritionally, it's smart in terms of the agricultural economy and it's smart in terms of the environment. These environmentalists who would be oh, so politically correct in terms of the environment but who don't protest shipping strawberries from California to Ontario—leaving however big a carbon footprint along the way—are missing the boat. Do you understand what I'm saying? I'm trying to be as clear as I can. We all should be very concerned about this.

I grew up in an old-fashioned kind of house, households that are rare now, households where people cooked at home, households where families had meals together. All of us were out there campaigning in various ways, shapes and forms a few months ago. We learned that people are never home; they aren't. You can go at 7 in morning, go at 7 at night; nobody's home. You go on weekends; nobody's home. If you go on Sundays—I know some people don't campaign on Sundays; some do—knock on the door, nobody's home. There isn't even a Sunday dinner routine or tradition. It has nothing to do with the Christian faith. It has to do with a tradition, a convention of families at least getting together and eating a good meal, a meal that's prepared from raw foods rather than processed foods.

So what kind of culture is that? It's a culture that increasingly is dependent upon the food processors, the fast food purveyors. These are dangerous, dangerous corporate entities who could give a tinker's damn about the health or welfare of their consumers. You know the author of the book, and then the movie *Super Size Me*, a remarkable insight into that industry in a very amusing and humorous way, although very frightening in terms of the context.

Read some of the stuff that's been written about the meat processing industry in the United States. Read some of that stuff—the meat-packing industry—and start to understand how, again, the advertising world has had us buy into some of the unhealthiest eating that humanity has encountered since the days of starvation, where it was a matter of unhealthy not eating. It's amazing.

We condemn and prosecute the tobacco industry for poisoning bodies, don't we? Very much. The world has changed in 40 years, from when doctors were endorsing various brands of tobacco; they were. Dr. Qaadri is too young to remember, but I remember in the 1950s doctors on television; the Lucky Strike ad would have a doctor endorsing this as the best cigarette to be had—not the least harmful, but the one that provided the most comfort and satisfaction. It was true—medical doctors. It was in the early 1960s that the American Surgeon General revealed the first alarming and broad-spread information about tobacco and cancer and other diseases.

So here we are. We've come along enough that we can take a dramatic critical approach to the tobacco industry and tobacco consumption, yet we somehow still think because McDonald's and Burger King and the whole nine yards of them can wrap themselves up with fluffy, fuzzy animals and Ronald McDonald clowns, and can pay blood money, like McDonald's houses that accommodate parents of kids who are getting treatments in hospitals in big cities—yet we say these people are somehow good corporate citizens. I say bullshit. Bullshit.

1720

Why should we not be taking the same critical approach to those corporate entities that could care less about your health or, for that matter, the health of your kids and grandkids? Why should we care any more about their well-being and longevity than we do about the tobacco industry's? We actually talk about them as being good corporate citizens.

And, of course, the argument of choice—oh, yes, the old choice. Well, you know that there are still smoking advocates, tobacco advocates, shills for the tobacco industry in the United States and Canada, and internationally. They say, "Well, we don't tell people to smoke two packs a day. People have to show moderation and only smoke one cigarette a day or maybe a cigarette a week." Bull spit. Because do you know what? If smokers only smoked one cigarette a week, the tobacco industry wouldn't make any money.

It's just like casinos who say, "Choice: We don't tell people to blow their paycheques. We want people to show moderation. Just come to the casino once a year with \$10 and gamble that." Once again, bull spit. If

gamblers only spent \$10 a year in the casino, the casino industry would be bankrupt, wouldn't it? The casino relies on people blowing their brains out at that slot.

The booze industry: Take a look at the advertising that is geared 100% toward young people, particularly for so-called soft beverages—beer and coolers, the stuff made out of cheap wine or bad rum or vodka and sweetened up. Talk about bad processed food. The alcohol would be far better for you if you just took a shot. It would be, wouldn't it? You throw in all sorts of sugars and fruit colourings and, again, gratuitous calories. Ms. Gélinas is such a moderate woman; she's worried about people drinking alcohol. I suppose we all should, but it's Christmas time, and I'm sure that any number of us on Christmas Day will gather around with our families and have a modest one ounce of spirits, in good spirit.

But again, take a look at the advertising with beer and coolers. Because, you see, if beer drinkers only drank one case of beer a year, the beer industry wouldn't make any money. It can't survive on beer drinkers drinking one case of beer. The beer industry requires the heavy drinker; it's inherent in the industry.

The advertising is focused on young people. They need new clients. It's the image of the drug dealer hanging around the school yard giving kids free ecstasy or free cocaine or free crack, amphetamines, so that they like it and then, of course, start buying it. The parallels between that drug dealer and the spirits industry and the cigarette industry and the fast-food industry are profound—and we've given the fast-food industry the red carpet into our schools, into our hospitals.

I find it mind-boggling that there's a McDonald's franchise in the hospitals just down the road on University Avenue. What are these people thinking? Spit for brains. Think about it. What are they thinking? Incredible. Here we are: Just down the road we've got a row of Canada's most expensive hospitals on the most expensive real estate providing some of the most specialized treatments to some of the most hard-to-treat cases, and those dumb SOBs have McDonald's in the lounges of the hospital, so that either the guest or the patient—yeah, the patient—can go down, pulling their intravenous, and get themselves a Big Mac. Unbelievable.

I say these things not to be melodramatic, not to be alarmist, but to point out the paucity of policy in this bill, to try to demonstrate to you and maybe to some others that the bill just doesn't cut it.

Choice? You're not doing very much to influence it with this bill, are you? In terms of this government's regard for the health of our children, when you see this is all they've got to put forward, apparently the government doesn't give a flick about the health of our children—thanks to Ms. Broten, of course, for the word “flick.”

So I tell you, I will be guided by our critic, the member from Trinity-Spadina, and other colleagues of mine as to whether or not I support the bill. I haven't heard all the debate yet. I'm reluctant to because I don't want to be endorsing this sort of pap when the crisis requires so much more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act legislation. I'm saddened to hear that the honourable member for Welland is reluctant to support legislation which takes the right initiative, the right step to ban trans fats from our schools to ensure that we have healthy lifestyles for our kids.

Let me remind this House again what this legislation is about. This legislation is about ending the selling of food with trans fats in school cafeterias, this legislation is about banning junk food and trans fats in all public school vending machines, and this legislation is about healthier menu choices in cafeterias based on the new Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. This legislation is not about vending machines in Queen's Park. If the honourable member has problems with that, I'm sure he can take that up with the Speaker.

What we need to ensure is that we take the healthy initiative, a responsible initiative such as this legislation, to ensure that our kids do not face obesity. This bill is moving in the right direction to ensure healthy lifestyles for our kids.

This commitment was very much present in our party's campaign platform. While campaigning just a few months ago, when I was talking to the parents in my riding of Ottawa Centre, every single parent was in support of such an initiative. They want the government to take active measures to ensure that schools are safe and healthy places. That is why I'm supporting and our government is supporting this piece of legislation to ensure that our kids are living and getting an education in a healthy school.

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to compliment the member for Welland because I was out in the lobby on a phone call and I saw when he was speaking. He's so passionate when he speaks and so informed in terms of some of his references to the restaurant industry and initiatives. But the truth of the fact is what he said, that it just doesn't do it. It's like an empty dream, an empty promise, or waking up and realizing you couldn't really remember your dream except that you had one. The problem with the new member for Ottawa Centre is that he's drinking all the Kool-Aid they are pouring for him. He's reading those notes that Dalton has written and he's starting to believe it.

The truth of this thing is in the outcome. We're all in support, and this is a first step. In my view, the member for Welland was quite right when he said that the substance isn't there. There are exemptions. Section 4 has seven different areas where they can initiate regulations and those regulations can exempt hotdog day or pancake day or wherever else it is. All of these things are exempted, if someone brings in stuff and shares it on bake day or something like that—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The problem is I'm suspicious. I'm suspicious of the motive to sound like they're doing

the right thing but not wanting to create any controversy with some of the food suppliers.

Now, work with the stakeholders on this file and you'll see that the industry itself is responding to Canada's food guidelines as well as the thrust of the debate around obesity in our children, and they should work with an active lifestyle and they should work with the real things they can do in our schools. I'm all for the education component that this debate is about, and the information that will be present in our schools about what is healthy eating. Nutrition is so important; we are what we eat. I'm waiting for the rebuttal from the member for Welland to finally put this to rest, but don't be fooled that because there's a bill before you they're actually doing anything.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I, too, would like to congratulate the member for Welland, Peter Kormos, for his presentation. He certainly was able to make the link between taking a low part and leaving people to believe that you're doing a whole lot more. The bill does not ban trans fat. And even if did, it does not ban junk food in school. This is what Mr. Kormos was trying to say. If you lead people to believe that if it says zero trans fat, it's healthy, you are leading them toward poor health. You are leading them toward disease. What we would like is a very progressive agenda toward health promotion: primary, secondary, tertiary prevention, like some of the examples the good doctor gave earlier today. This would make a difference in the crisis in obesity among our children and be a real concrete step.

1730

All the bill does is give the government the power to regulate trans fats; it does not enact a ban on them. And it treats trans fats differently from other junk food. Here again, it will lead parents to believe that the food the cafeteria is now offering is healthy, but the cause and effect is not there. Because you have banned trans fats does not mean you have nutritious foods. There are a lot of steps in between. Mr. Kormos has given plenty of examples to show us that you can have Oreos, Cocoa Puffs, Nestlé Crunch ice cream bars, Dunkin' Donuts, Kentucky Fried Chicken. Can anybody think of anything more greasy and unhealthy for you than Kentucky Fried Chicken? Well, rest assured, because Kentucky Fried Chicken is now trans-fat-free. Does that make it healthy?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I stand proudly in support of this bill. I recognize that the opposition has a few concerns, but this is a start in the right direction in terms of trying to ensure that our children eat healthy and recognize what's important, and teaching them eventually, later in life, to take on proper habits.

I speak personally of my three children who are in school. They already recognize the difference between junk food and healthy food. They recognize that there is a need for them to concern themselves with exercise.

We take it for granted that the bill may have wrinkles in the process, but in the end it's a beginning, and it's in the right direction.

When we talk about trimming trans fat, it can easily be substituted in the schools with other products. Certain restaurants have already implemented just that.

It's an important bill and it's a safeguard. It's a means by which now we can ensure that future generations will have an opportunity to look back at what we've done to ensure the safety of our citizens and our children.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you to the members who chose to make comment on my comments. I've got to tell the member from Ottawa Centre, for whom I have regard, that making a two-minute comment during questions and comments really isn't participating in the debate. It really doesn't cut it. What I find remarkable is that here's a bill, the first bill this government has had before this Parliament for second reading, and so few government members want to participate in a meaningful way in the debate. I find that truly remarkable and of great concern. Even the learned doctor from Etobicoke North, who knows so much about this subject, who could have gone on literally for hours, all with new information, was clearly ordered to cut it short at 10 minutes. Then other members, rather than standing up during the rotation and making what could be meaningful commentary on this bill and this most important issue, sit on their hands and in fact are allowed to be deluded into thinking that making a two-minute comment is participating in a debate.

That's not what your voters sent you to Queen's Park for. That's not why you're making the six-digit incomes—some of you more money than you've ever made before in your lives or ever will again. People expect more than this. People expect more of you. People expect you to show some interest in this legislation and not to be following the marching orders of your Premier's office.

If obesity is a crisis among young people—and I believe it is—if obesity is putting untold expenses on our health care system—and I believe it does—if obesity is taking lives at an early age—and I believe it is—then we should be attacking this with all of the force that we can muster, not a tiny first step. Incredible.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: It's my pleasure to spend a few minutes today talking about the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act. As we talk about what the government is doing with this act, it is really about helping families ensure that we teach our kids how to eat well and that we make sure that all of our children make good lifestyle choices and good choices as they grow up.

I can think only about my own circumstance. Obviously, my kids are not old enough. Zachary and Ryan would probably be getting ready to have some dinner pretty soon at home. They are just over two years old, but I can think about the fact that in their early years of life, I had an incredible focus as a mother on every tiny little bit of food that was going into their bodies. I made sure that

it was all organic and that I was making it at home. I'd get home late at night from meetings and speeches and I'd be making baby food. My husband would say, "Why are you doing this?" I said, "Because I really want to be sure what is in this food."

Now, as they grow up a little bit, obviously there are days where they happen to see something in the grocery store and maybe they want a can of food that has Shrek on it because, Lord knows, every child loves Shrek. The decision, as a mother, that I can make is that I choose how often they get to have that. We are not trying to be the cupcake police and say that kids can't have a hotdog or a piece of pizza at school on a special day, but we, with this bill, want to make sure that our cafeterias in schools serve more than French fries and gravy because, to be frank, Madam Speaker—and you might have been in high school around the same time as I was—there were a lot of days when there were a lot of French fries and gravy being eaten in those cafeterias.

Parents did not know what their children were eating. That is the critical point: making sure that there are alternative choices and that if a parent gives their child the \$2 that it takes to participate in a pizza or hotdog day, they are making that informed choice with their child. They know what their child is eating that day. But on a regular day, in the cafeteria in our schools, without any healthy choices, a parent has no idea what their child might be eating. You're not able to say, "Well, this is a special treat. Let's have pizza night on a Friday night." How many families do that? Lots of families do it. Lots of my constituents do that; we do that at home. But it's a decision that you make for a special night, a night when you know that the next day you'd better eat a lot of salad and vegetables. We want to make sure that kids have those choices.

If you look around the world, you see some other jurisdictions that are really moving aggressively on this point. We see very famous chefs around the world who are tackling this issue, for example in the UK. What they're finding is, that's a real struggle, but once those healthy choices are provided, students are taking their lunch money and buying that good, healthy food. If the contrast is something yummy and greasy like poutine versus something that looks horrible like a dried-up, very wilted salad, then, of course, none of us would make that choice. We are all of us susceptible to making those decisions, of being drawn by something that seems would be very delicious in the instant.

But when you have those healthy choices—and we're seeing a transition here in our own cafeteria in the Legislature. It is much easier this year to eat healthy in this building than it has been in the past. That's helping all of us make those good decisions.

When we look at how you start your life and you make your health decisions and your food habits, your eating habits develop so early in life. I have a pilot project for that development right in my own kitchen because, with two siblings exactly the same age, one will want to eat something totally different than the other.

What I offer is always healthy, but I have one who will always pick meat and one who will always pick vegetables. In fact, sitting on their high chairs, they'll exchange foods. They'll trade off who wants to eat what. So those habits of what you want to eat are formed early.

1740

We know in the province that we are seeing that the rate of obesity in kids has just tripled over the past 25 years. You really only need to spend some time outside a schoolyard, around your community at a children's festival or something to see first-hand how significant that challenge is for us. Obviously, during the month of September, all of us in this Legislature were out and about in our community.

One of the things that I do is, I really make sure that I talk to parents at school drop-off and pickup times. I talk to them about how we can help families better make sure that their kids are ready to learn. That's been a huge and significant real love that our Premier has worked on so hard, making sure that our kids are ready to learn, whether it's going to be full-day, early learning initiatives in our schools for our kids who are in SK or JK, having that envelope around them of extra care and health—and I see that already. Kids are ready to learn if they are well fed and if they've eaten something that's healthy. Every single person in this room and all of our constituents and TV viewers know full well that if your child is hungry and you give into that little treat that they're looking for, the behaviour is not going to be the best. Every mom knows that. That is just a tiny little snippet of how, if we make sure our kids have protein, they've eaten something healthy, they're going to be ready to learn in that classroom when they get back from lunch.

Mr. Mike Colle: They don't fall asleep.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: They don't fall asleep. They haven't had a big unhealthy lunch and they've eaten something healthy.

That's the premise of breakfast programs that were started in schools on another spectrum to make sure that our kids are healthy. In my own riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore, people work so hard across the community. John English school has a fantastic breakfast program. They feed a lot of kids there and make sure they're getting a healthy breakfast. They want to make sure the kids have a healthy breakfast, get the day off to a good start and then choose only to have something unhealthy and laden with trans fats in the cafeteria.

What this bill does is put an end to the selling of food with trans fats in school cafeterias. It is the starting point of picking one element of unhealthy foods, saying the inclusion of trans fat is often a component of a very unhealthy food product and let's get that out of there.

When it comes to junk food—and I know we've heard a lot from the opposition with respect to what we're doing with junk food. Let's remember, we already banned junk food in our elementary school vending machines early in our last mandate. It's been very successful. Again, it is getting at an element of the sale of food where there are absolutely no controls. Very

anonymously, a child can get up to that vending machine, buy that junk food and make a decision to throw—maybe their mom or dad or maybe they made it themselves; maybe there was a healthy lunch sent to school that day and it got tossed in the trash because a bag of chips and a can of Coke was seeming a lot more interesting. We're going to make sure you can't get that in a vending machine, whether it's an elementary school or a high school, because it's a real attractive draw.

How many of us have been in our places of work at 4, 4:30, 5 o'clock and you're starting to get hungry. All you really want is something to eat to get you through to that dinner. If all there is are chips and pop, that's what you will eat. That is exactly what we are trying to eliminate in our schools.

I think the other important element and a real significant component of the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act that cannot be underestimated is the healthier menu choices in cafeterias based on the new Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. So taking instruction from Canada's Food Guide, finding ways to reflect our multicultural heritage in this country, making sure there's all sorts of interesting foods to eat and that they're healthy.

It is quite amazing to see my own children in their garderie where they are, that they're eating tabbouleh and couscous and every kind of multicultural food that exists, and it is great to start that early on. If you don't start it on the home front, you can start it now in your school cafeterias when we get those healthier menu choices. When we see those healthier menu choices start to be in place, we will see a development of a palate, a desire to eat healthier because, if you eat a healthy lunch, you feel better that day.

Mr. Mike Colle: And more chick peas. You've got to eat chick peas.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Chick peas, beans and black beans are very healthy components. My colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence and I were down in the cafeteria recently. We got ourselves a great salad filled with all sorts of protein elements, and it was a good start to an afternoon. It will help our kids make sure they are ready to learn and that is, for our government, a critical, critical component.

We are making sure we're improving all elements of the education system, and our Minister of Education and our Premier have done an incredible job moving the yardstick forward.

Mr. Mike Colle: What's the Japanese word for soybeans?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Edamame.

Mr. Mike Colle: Kids love edamame.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Edamame is a favourite. For all moms who are watching out there, one big trick around my house, if no one will eat any protein, is to offer them edamame. You can buy them frozen in the grocery store. You just get them a little bit warm, soft—and pure protein; they love them. It's a great healthy eating trick and they actually think that they are a treat,

so you can also convince kids that all of these great, healthy alternatives are treats.

I want to pick up on something the member for Welland was talking about: families having meals together. There's no doubt that in this modern, busy age families aren't able to have those meals together as much as they would like. I know that that's the case right across the province, right across the country and in many parts of the world. Parents are working hard to make ends meet and they're struggling to sit down for that meal. But the fact that families aren't sitting down for dinner does not mean that the mom or dad cares any less about the food that is going into that child's belly. We want to make sure those options are available and that we're helping our kids learn to be good eaters, because it will set them off on a path. If they set off on the wrong path, and when we see childhood obesity rates soaring, we know that those obese children are going to be adults with a lot of health issues.

That's why people like the heart and stroke association and others very much support what we're doing with respect to this bill. They know that those health issues will follow our children for their entire life and they will struggle with those issues. If we eat things that are high in calories and we are not focused on good, healthy eating, we will have health problems that will last us for many years. That is at the root of what this is about: making sure that our kids learn how to eat well, that we give them those choices, that we have them understand what it means to eat healthy. Let me just give you a very depressing statistic. The Heart and Stroke Foundation estimates that the consumption of processed trans fats may account for 30,000 to 50,000 heart attack deaths every decade in Canada.

To see a linear connection between something like trans fats—no reason to have it in our food. We do not need it except for those tiny, rare instances when it's in that food naturally and we have made an exemption for that type of food, what is essentially healthy food but with a minor component of trans fat. We need to do everything we can, as a government that cares about the health of our society, the health of our kids, that they are ready to learn and to work, to make sure we tackle those heart attack deaths. Adults who suffer a heart attack may then choose to really improve their fitness and they're going to start working out. All of us, as we age, know lots and lots of people who are starting to do that. Why would we not try to do that early on? Why would we not try to set Ontario's young people, Ontario's students, on a path where they will not have to have a mid-life revelation that they need to eat healthy?

I'll just give a little story about my own dad. My dad was a real health food guy when I was very young, and one of the things I struggled with was how healthy my lunches were that he would send to school with me. Sandwiches made out of meat—cheese sprinkled with sunflower seeds was often a component of the lunches that I was sent with, and there's no doubt I probably would have been prepared to trade that with somebody.

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But what was driven home to me by my parents, regardless of whether they were with me or with me only in my head, was that you need to eat healthy because if you are a healthy person, if you are an active person and you eat well when you're young, you will not have many, many other health issues and challenges that you might encounter later on. You should take your vitamins, you should drink your milk, you should eat your protein and your whole grain bread. We never had anything other than brown bread when we were growing up.

So despite the fact that our kids are going to school, as they should, every single mom and dad wants to know that the government is their partner in making sure that they're there ready to learn, with healthy food ready to eat. That's what this bill is about. It is our symbol of partnership with parents across the province. We're there with you. We want to make sure your kids have those healthy choices. We're going to do what we can to partner with you in that regard so we will have healthy foods for healthy schools, and that will mean we will have healthy kids.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a pleasure to rise to comment on my colleague from Etobicoke-Lakeshore's comments—interesting remarks. I do want to say, though, after we had a general election and we had almost a month-plus pause before the assembly was actually called into session, the bill that the government puts on as their main priority—their big change, their big vision for where Dalton McGuinty wanted to take the province of Ontario for the next four years—has to do with regulating high school and elementary school cafeterias. It just seems such a bizarre set of priorities.

We see standardized testing, for example, falling far short of what Dalton McGuinty promised. I know that's sort of redundant and all. We've given up on meeting promises in the first place, I suppose, from the government, but my goodness, you'd think we'd see some initiatives around the quality initiatives. How are you going to raise the quality in the classroom, how are you going to ensure our students succeed and compete with the best in the world? All the students we know in York, in Hamilton, in Niagara, now in portables, the biggest expansion of portables, I think, in the history of the province of Ontario due to their malfunctioning cap policy—nothing on that. Trying to expand deteriorating schools like Central Public in Grimsby, Blessed Trinity in Grimsby—not on the agenda.

Instead, let's talk more about regulating cafeterias in the province of Ontario because, my goodness, that's the number one priority with parents in the province of Ontario. They want to know that the Colonel Sanders Kentucky Fried Chicken is not coming through that school door. I can imagine those poor students hovering outside of the doors of the school, trying to scarf down those trans-fat chips because they dare not take it into that school. Meanwhile, guns and knives and violence hap-

pening across the province of Ontario—never mind that; let's go after that bag of chips.

I am just shocked that after an election, after a long pause, this is the meagre offering of the Dalton McGuinty government when it comes to improving quality in our classrooms.

Mr. Paul Miller: I must say, that was a wonderful presentation by my colleague from across the room. She touched on a lot of areas that are of concern to people in our province about our children and what they eat.

However, if this government really wants to make a difference on this particular bill—I agree with the former speaker that this probably isn't the major priority in our province, but it definitely has to be dealt with. If you look, most trans fats consumed today are industrially created and are partially hydrogenated plant oils, a process developed in the early 1900s and first commercialized by Crisco in 1911. If you really want to address this bill, then maybe you should go to the industries that are continually putting these things into the food. You can't just ban a cafeteria chocolate bar or a bag of chips and say that that's going to end the process. You have to go to the source. The source is the industries that put this stuff into our food. Why isn't the government going after that? This is just a small step towards the major problem.

"Trans fats, in their common name, are unsaturated fat with trans isomer fatty acids. These fats may be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated."

These are the types of situations that they have to deal with. They have to go after the content which is being produced in our province and put into these foods. If they did that, they wouldn't have to worry about what's in the vending machines, because the contents would be healthy.

This is not going far enough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Certainly, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore did a wonderful job in presenting the key elements of Bill 8. It was a masterful job in pointing out why we need to bring in Bill 8: to provide that positive platform for students in our schools, in elementary and secondary schools, so that they could succeed at learning each and every day, grasp those fundamentals of reading, writing and arithmetic, and participate in phys ed and take on music and acting courses. This is why this is such a substantive piece of legislation that we want to get through this House in short order.

I want to talk about a manufacturer in my riding of Peterborough, Quaker Tropicana Gatorade, that employs 600 employees, all members of CAW. Our good friend Buzz Hargrove endorsed our platform in the last election because he knows who stands up for working families in this province, and it's this government. In fact, they've done a lot of research in developing snacks, granola bars, that they've eliminated trans fats from. They're to be congratulated as a good corporate citizen in Ontario and Canada to develop a whole series of snacks.

I take the opportunity, when I'm home in Peterborough, to pack my kids' lunches—my son, Braden,

who's nine; my daughter, Shanae, who's eight—and I make sure that when I pack their lunches they have these healthy Quaker snacks that they can have each and every day. That's important—important to the economy of Peterborough; important to the economy of Ontario.

I salute the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who has made the case this afternoon to get this bill passed in the province of Ontario.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore—I congratulate her on her new role. There were some trans fats that she missed tracking when she was the Minister of the Environment. I don't mean that in any harmful way except to say that she's missing the point.

She did read the notes that were provided to her well. Those notes were pretty much that this is a substantive bill, which it isn't. The opposition, both ourselves and the third party, have made it clear that it's an important topic. It could easily have been done more or less in private members' business on a Thursday. We would have agreed to it and it would have set up a regulatory framework to achieve some of the laudable objectives.

The truth that we've said all along—we need to know the starting point so that we can measure that there's been some degree of success. There should be some disclosure of what it's going to cost to enforce and administer this in the schools. Who's going to be checking these things? How are they going to be doing it? Some of the service providers, as was mentioned—I know the member from Peterborough, those treats he's putting in from Quaker—I hope he's disclosing those to the Integrity Commissioner.

The only thing is, in all sincerity, we agree. But what we've got to be clear about here is, you're really not doing anything. There are so many exemptions in this

process. I'm worried about fundraising in schools today. That is a large deal. Often, it's about selling chocolate bars or chips or bake sales. Are they going to shut this down?

There's some stuff here, real operational questions that are going to be problematic. If there's a problem, I'm sure McGuinty will be just like with the licence plate; he'll just say, "No, we won't do it."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I guess in response what I would say to my colleagues across the House is that our kids' health is worth it, and we are prepared to take whatever steps we need to do to ensure that we start tackling those obesity rates, that we make sure our kids are healthy and are eating healthily. That's what this bill is about.

As I said, Madam Speaker—and I know you're a mother—this is about partnering with mothers and fathers across this province to let them know: "We want to work with you to make sure that your kids are in school, ready to learn." This is one of the steps that our government is taking in addition to making sure that our kids get more exercise and that they are in schools that are safe and healthy with all the components to make sure that that educational experience is one that ensures that generations to come will thrive and prosper. That's what this bill is about: healthy food for healthy schools for healthy kids.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): It being 6 o'clock, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, December 13, at 10 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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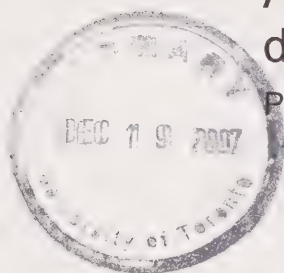
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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 39^e législature



**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 13 December 2007

Jeudi 13 décembre 2007

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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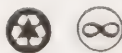
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 13 December 2007

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 13 décembre 2007

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

FIRE PROTECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

Mr. Prue moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes / Projet de loi 14, Loi prévoyant que le code du bâtiment et le code de prévention des incendies sont réputés exiger des détecteurs d'incendie, des systèmes d'alerte d'incendie interconnectés et des sorties de secours incombustibles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Prue has moved second reading of Bill 14. Pursuant to the standing orders, he has 10 minutes to make his initial presentation.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is indeed again an honour to stand on this bill. This is the third time that this bill has been introduced in this House. The first time was in 2005, where it received unanimous approval at second reading and was ordered to committee. The second time was in 2006, where it received unanimous approval of this House, went to committee, was approved unanimously in committee and was ordered for third reading. Unfortunately, in both circumstances, the House was prorogued, and the bill died on the order paper. Hence, it is back here again today.

I'd like to commence by thanking those who are in attendance today. As you can see, we have a huge showing of firefighters from across Ontario who are here in support of the bill. They come from Toronto and from all of the areas around the capital, and they are here to show support for this bill, as they have in the past. I would like to thank as well the people and groups who have written letters of support in the past on this bill: the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters' Association, the Toronto fire chief, the Toronto tenants' federation and the Coalition for Social Justice.

The biggest thank you, though, I want to give is to Mr. Tom Steers, who is here; he was here on the last two occasions as well. I would like to extend my gratitude to him, a man who has worked for nearly nine years to see that the tragedy that happened to him, to his friends, to his fiancée, in January 1999 is never revisited by anyone in this province.

At 3 a.m. on January 14, 1999, a fire broke out at 2362 Queen Street East in the Beach. It was a horrific fire. It literally burned the building to the ground. Two people died, one of them being Linda Elderkin and the other being Paul Benson. Linda was Tom's fiancée. As residents fled the building in the dark and in panic, no one pulled the fire alarm. Linda and Paul were asleep and unaware of the tragedy that was unfolding around them and that would soon engulf them. Finally, the heat of that fire became so intense that the wires melted, and that was what triggered the alarm in that building. The firefighters arrived within minutes, as they always do in Toronto. They found an apartment building completely engulfed in flames. They found that the back fire escape was completely engulfed in flames and that no one who was in the building could get down either the front stairs or down the back fire escape. They could hear the victims' screams, yet with all of their training and with all of their courage, they could do nothing.

An inquest was held into this fire in 2000, a year later. The inquest jury made 28 recommendations, two of which are embodied in this bill. Tom Steers has fought every step of the way to have these 28 recommendations become law and to be enforced, and the fire departments across Ontario have been with him every step of the way and ask that these recommendations of the jury be enforced as well. Tom has gone to the newspapers, he has gone to the courts, he has been to this Legislature—now for the third time—asking that the jury's recommendations become law. A lesser man may have given up; Tom did not, and I believe he will not until this is passed.

The bill purports to do two things: first of all, that all the fire alarms need to be interconnected with fire detectors mandatory in rental buildings, and the second part is that the fire code needs to be amended to ensure that fire escapes are made of non-combustible material.

In terms of the interconnected fire alarms, the interconnected fire alarms would work when an out-of-control fire triggers a building-wide alert. It would be in the common areas only. I want to assuage the fears of anyone who thinks that a resident or a tenant burning some toast in the toaster will set off the alarm; it will not. The alarm

will only be triggered when the common areas, not the individual residences, have smoke; that is, if fire is that strong that the smoke spills out into the halls, it will trigger the alarm throughout the building so that people on the first, second, third or 20th floor of a building will be able to hear it and know that there is a serious fire. If this had happened at 2362 Queen Street, I am sure that both Linda and Paul would still be alive.

The second aspect of this bill involves wooden fire escapes. It has to be obvious to everyone that to have a wooden fire escape on the outside of a wooden building is tantamount to asking for disaster. It has been outlawed years ago in most jurisdictions around the world, including most of the states of the United States of America. It is still common practice in some of the jurisdictions in Canada but ought not to be, with the greatest of respect. Remember that fire escapes exist on these buildings because the building is not in compliance with the fire code. Whenever you see a fire escape on the outside of a building, you know that the building is not in compliance with the fire code. If you see an apartment building without fire escapes, you know that it is in compliance and therefore it does not require fire escapes. So the reason they are there is because the building does not meet the fire code, and this is a way to get around it.

1010

What is required in law in Ontario is that there be two exits, and very often in these older buildings there are not two exits; there is an exit into the hall, but there's nothing else, and so the fire escape is the second means to get out of the building should there be a fire. Older buildings do not have firewalls. Some of them do not have the self-contained units of a modern building where the fire will be contained within an apartment for a number of hours before burning out into other areas, and they do not have multiple staircases; hence the need for fire escapes. The fire escape allows compliance for the existing unsafe condition.

I'd like to read what the fire code says right now. Section 9.4.7.13(3) says: "Fire escapes shall be of metal or concrete"—that's the law, and then there's the "except," and this is what we're trying to change—"except that wooden fire escapes may be used on buildings of combustible construction if all posts and brackets are at least 89 millimetres in their least dimension and all other woodwork is 38 millimetres in its least dimension."

Just for older people who may be watching this or some of the members of the Legislature, that means that the posts are four by fours and the rest of it is two by fours. If any of you have ever had some spare wood and used it in a campfire, you know how fast you can burn a two by four. It burns pretty readily. This is crying out for change and in fact to be deleted from the fire code.

I ask the members to consider who lives in these old, potentially unsafe buildings, and I think all of you know from your own ridings who lives in these buildings. They tend to be people of low income. They tend to be students if it's near a school or a university. They tend to be people who live on social assistance and who cannot

afford to live in newer or better-kept apartments, and they tend in many, many circumstances to be new immigrants.

The last Parliament saw another bill by Mrs. Jeffrey, who I'm glad to see is here today, and we are in complete agreement should she bring that bill forward. But hers deals with new construction; I'm asking you to consider this one for the older buildings that are unsafe. Perhaps with the two of them together, we can try to be as safe as other jurisdictions. I know that the city of Vancouver, which has adopted both parts—the one that she will, I hope, bring forward again and the one I'm bringing forward today—has had no deaths for a number of years, whereas Ontario averages between 100 and 200 people dying in fires each and every year.

I'm asking you as well to consider the brave firefighters, those who need to get to the fire, those who have to get the people out of the building, those who have to go up burning fire escapes. Make life simpler and safer and better for them so that they too can go home to their families.

I ask the support of this Legislature for this bill, and I thank again the firefighters and Mr. Steers for being here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: As always, it's a privilege and honour to stand up and speak on many different issues, and I want to thank my colleague Michael Prue, the member from Beaches—East York, for bringing this very important issue again to this place. I think he has brought it twice so far; this is the third time. I remember last time, I stood up and spoke in support of that bill, supporting the intention of the bill. Also, my colleague Linda Jeffrey brought an almost similar bill to this place to be discussed, because I guess all of us have a great intention to create some kind of protection mechanism for tenants, for the people who live in many different residential or apartment buildings across the province.

I also want to take the opportunity to welcome the firefighters, who give great support to this bill. They've been working around the clock to protect all the people of this great province of Ontario.

It's important to allow time to talk about safety. I was listening carefully to the member from Beaches—East York talking about this issue. I know this issue came as a response to the coroner's inquest that happened in 2000, and also as a result of the deaths of two people from his riding in 1999. I think it's important to be able to establish rules and laws to protect innocent people, especially when they live in old buildings. I know the building code right now requires concrete or metal fire escapes to be installed in all buildings, and also that it's mandatory to have alarm systems in residential buildings, even a single home, because it's important to protect residents and give them some kind of a warning.

I know this issue has been debated many different times. As I said, I support the essence of the bill and I support my colleague from Beaches—East York for

bringing this bill forward, because it's very important, as I mentioned, to protect the residents who live in older buildings. This has happened in many older buildings and older homes, which, sadly, are occupied by low-income families, students and people with no ability to move to a newer home, all of which are built according to the building code in a safe way. But the minister of corrections and safety has established some kinds of recommendations or rules to support all buildings, all places, and also ask them to have metal and concrete fire escapes to protect the residents who live in those dwellings.

It's a great bill, and I think all of us can support it, and hopefully it will go to third reading. Hopefully it will pass, because all of us, from both sides of the House, have a great interest in seeing all residents live in a safe place, and also in creating a mechanism to create safety for all of the people who live in many different jurisdictions. This issue is very important. We have debated it many different times. I hope that at the end of this debate we will pass this bill and support it. Hopefully it will go to committee to tighten it up and see what we can do. All of the bills, all the rules and laws, have many different ideas and different points of view. We have to debate this bill very well to see what the best mechanism is to use, because it's very important. The safety of our people is more important than anything else, and without passing tougher rules sometimes, we leave our residents and our citizens unsafe. I think it's about time.

I thank the member from Beaches–East York for bringing such an important bill for the third time, and I'm looking forward to debating it for a second and a third time, and hopefully we'll see it established and passed. It would be another initiative to protect the residents of Ontario.

Thank you, again, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak. I wish my colleague luck, and hopefully this bill will pass.

Mr. Peter Shurman: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member for Beaches–East York for this important bill. It deserves passage.

Earlier this week, I recall that the galleries of this House were filled with firefighters, and there was an extraordinary amount of time spent by members, even the Speaker, acknowledging the presence of so many of these good people here with us. Some of the firefighters took the time to visit individually with their MPPs privately. I had the pleasure of hosting several of our good firefighters from the city of Vaughan.

All parties acknowledge that these people do fine work, and they also acknowledge the care that firefighters provide to the people they serve. Our efforts here should be to demonstrate that support very tangibly, and this bill is an aspect of that. How do we do that? Well, by making life easier for the firefighters themselves. After all, they put their lives at risk for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Prue's bill is not new in this House. It has appeared before several times, as has been noted. Perhaps we could say to Mr. Prue that three times lucky will apply. All this bill says is that fire detectors should be

present in public or common areas in residential buildings of two units or more. I would venture to say that there's no one in this House who hasn't installed detectors in their own single family dwelling or their apartment. It just makes sense. Who wouldn't want them?

1020

The bill would also make it necessary that fire escapes be constructed of non-combustible material. Seriously, are we still looking at wooden fire escapes, or has somebody contemplated plastic? I know that's a bit sarcastic, but it seems pretty obvious that we have to make sure the structures that get us out of burning buildings are the last structures to go, and concrete or steel would do that.

In short, I support the bill, as does the entire Progressive Conservative caucus.

I believe this bill also calls for modifications to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. It's probably an appropriate time to call attention to this act, because about a third of it deals with labour relations for firefighters. Perhaps what it needs is a thorough review some time in the not-too-distant future. My stakeholder firefighters want well-trained, happy, fit and properly treated firefighters in their midst. I agree with that sentiment. Firefighters are asking now for consideration for a mandatory retirement age of 60, which of course goes against recent human rights changes that provide for an open-ended retirement age, but frankly, I'm 60 years old and I personally don't want a 67-year-old man carrying me out of a burning building down a ladder. So I think that deserves some consideration, and it finds itself in the Fire Protection and Prevention Act as well.

In addition to that, collective bargaining between firefighters and the cities they serve oftentimes takes the entire period of a contract to expire before it actually becomes finalized. I think that's something that bears review as well. So in voting along with Mr. Prue on this act in a positive way, I would call the House's attention to these important considerations that firefighters are asking for under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997.

Mr. Paul Miller: This bill is a must, in my opinion. We cannot expose our firefighters to potential life-threatening situations. Steel fire escapes allow firefighters to have solid platforms to work from. This enables them to have access to multilevel buildings, to be able to remove people and pets from life-threatening situations. This legislation is long overdue. It also provides firefighters an escape route in the case of flash fires and explosions. We have an obligation to the families of our firefighters also. Every time they go to work, I'm sure their families are concerned. I, for one, want to see this legislative body provide all the necessary safety features possible to ensure the safety of these brave men.

All buildings must be forced into compliance as soon as possible. I support this bill 110%. I think the wisdom of this Legislature will come through on this bill and finally it will be where it's supposed to be.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm pleased to speak today in support of Bill 14. I'd like to congratulate the member for Beaches–East York for his persistence and his vision. I

remember that the first time this bill was introduced it was Bill 184 in 2005, and then its replacement in 2006 was Bill 120, I believe. I'm delighted to support all fire protection legislation that's designed to save lives.

Fire kills nearly 100 Ontarians each and every year and it injures many more, the overwhelming number at home. Despite mandatory smoke alarms and improved building construction, there has not been a substantial reduction in this number in over a decade. The cost to the Ontario economy in relation to health care expenses, property loss and the personal impact is in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Smoke alarms are simply not enough.

I believe Bill 14 has the support of the firefighting community, the fire safety industry, many large and small municipalities, contractors, seniors' organizations, the insurance industry and Ontarians across this province.

Statistics show us that fatal residential fires most often occur between the hours of midnight and 6 a.m., when the victims are asleep. Victims are also disproportionately children and the elderly—those who are vulnerable because they're physically unable to get to an escape route. There's no magic bullet. There's no single solution to the dilemma we face in legislating adequate fire protection; rather, for Ontarians to be effectively protected from fire, we need to use a number of strategies. It's clear that simply having a smoke alarm is not enough.

The member's bill addresses key concerns that I support. That is, where there is a fire in a building in which more than one dwelling exists, an alarm should be sounded in other dwellings within that same building. It seems only logical that alarms warn neighbouring or adjacent dwellings in the event of a fire. However, I do recall a report by CBC Marketplace that was broadcast back in June 1990 which reported that "one third of smoke alarms fail to go off in an emergency: People just don't maintain them."

"Canada has one of the highest rates of fire deaths in the world, and almost 80% of them happen at night....

"Many people think the smell of smoke will wake them up."

Fire alarms cannot protect you from fire, and often a fire is out of control by the time people in a residence are warned by a fire alarm. By the time a parent realizes that their house is on fire, it's too late to save the children. By the time you realize there is a fire, it's too late to save an elderly parent.

The second part of this bill addresses the ability to escape from a flaming building. Once alerted to a fire situation, it's critical that people can escape safely. This bill recognizes that there are many fire escapes in the province that were constructed at a time when measures we now take for granted were not in place, and that there are a number of buildings that have a wooden fire escape that offers no protection in the case of a fire where the only means of escape may in fact contribute to a fire. Firefighters cannot climb up and rescue someone if the fire escape is on fire or weakened by fire. Again, common sense tells us that we need to make changes to give people every chance to escape a fire alive.

The member's efforts are to be lauded, and I know that a number of fire professionals support this initiative, but this legislation is only one strategy. Ideally, I believe better fire protection would include residential fire sprinklers. Members on all sides know my passion on this issue, and as tempted as I am to use my time to promote this issue, I would instead encourage other members to join in the debate on fire safety as the member from Beaches—East York has done by introducing this bill. The facts are overwhelming, and the terrible, ongoing loss of life is preventable. This issue goes beyond partisan politics.

Again, I would like to commend the member from Beaches—East York for being persistent in bringing forward this important piece of legislation. I'm very happy to support Bill 14, and I believe that the time is right now to bring forward legislation that is meaningful and ensures the safety and security of all Ontarians.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Beaches—East York for once again introducing this worthwhile bill that will increase fire safety and save lives. I was pleased to support it in the past, when he introduced the same private member's bill in 2005 and in 2006, and I'm pleased to support it once again today.

As I was preparing these remarks, I looked back at Hansard from June 8, 2006, the last time this bill was debated in the Legislature. I started my remarks on that occasion by pointing out how strange it was that the House would unanimously be in support of an important initiative like this for the safety of our population, and yet the government seems to think it's not important enough to bring back for third reading and actually make it part of the law of the land. In April 2005, the member of Beaches—East York first introduced this bill, which was then Bill 184. It was debated during private members' business and was passed on a voice vote. Sadly, the bill was referred to committee and died there.

In June 2006, the member from Beaches—East York once again introduced the bill. This time it was Bill 120, which was debated and passed second reading, and I want to point out that it passed second reading with the support of members of all parties that were there—not one vote against the bill. From there it was referred to committee and had hearings. In the committee it was supported by the Canadian Automatic Sprinkler Association, Thomas Steers, the Toronto Fire Services, the Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association and the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. There was even a member from the government side of the House who appeared before the committee to speak in support of the bill. During those committee hearings, Deputy Chief Frank Lamie from the Toronto Fire Services said, "The measures required in Bill 120 will enhance early detection and provide early warning to all building occupants. Bill 120 will also provide an alternate escape route that can be part of the residential fire escape plan. The main advantage of early detection and early warning is to allow building occupants to get out of the building when the fire is small."

1030

The committee reported back to the Legislature in September 2006, and last spring, when the House prorogued, the bill died again. It was never called for third reading. The committee had done its job, but after that, it must be the government that calls the bill back for third reading, as you would know, Mr. Speaker. Let's remember back last spring. The Legislature prorogued several weeks early. It wasn't that we ran out of time to deal with this bill; it was that the government didn't deem it a priority for the safety of the people.

Now it may be that, like several other private members' bills from this side of the House, the government may choose to incorporate these good ideas into a government bill and bring them forward, which they could do—put this in the building code review—but so far they haven't done it.

What I really want to talk about is that private members' business should be about members doing the right thing for their constituents and collectively doing the right thing for the people of this province. A couple of days ago there was motion introduced to look at making the workings of this place more family friendly. I would think, as that committee is looking at that, they should look at making private members' business more productive. As we look at all the good bills that have been introduced, all the good bills that have been passed for second reading, very few ever get to third and final reading and become the law of the land.

At the beginning of this new session, I would hope that the government would put aside partisan interests and do the right thing for the people of Ontario and have that review. I hope they will evaluate private members' bills based on their merits, not on who introduced them, and that when we have a good bill like this one they will take action and move forward for the good of the people.

I think everyone agrees that the changes in this bill will save lives. This bill requires that fire alarms be interconnected so that if a fire detector is activated in a public area, it will sound an alarm that is audible; people everywhere can hear it throughout the building. Simply put, this tries to ensure that if there is a fire in a public area or a serious fire within one of the units, people will be warned in time to exit the building or to make it possible to extinguish the fire. Early warning allows people to get out before the situation is life-threatening. As a former firefighter, I can tell you that often after the fire has been put out and you look at the results, you think, "If only someone had noticed it sooner, it could have been a much different situation."

One of the concerns that is raised about the interconnected fire alarms in a multi-residential building is whether the alarm will go off too frequently. I think we all agree that if an alarm sounds every time someone burns toast, then people start to ignore it or even disable it. This is one of the reasons I support this bill, because it is the fire detectors in public areas that are required to be interconnected. That means that if someone burns something in the kitchen, their individual fire alarms should

alert them to the problem so they can deal with it. However, if the fire gets out of control, then everyone in the building will be warned. That also means that if someone has a fire in a basement apartment, the people on the top floor should be warned before the fire spreads to the stairs and blocks their route out of the building.

I also want to address the part of this bill that will save lives, which is the requirement that fire escapes be constructed of non-combustible materials. I spoke to that quite at length the last time this bill was here. The current building code regulations simply do not do an adequate job of ensuring that people will have an escape route in the event of a serious fire. The current regulation reads as follows:

"Fire escapes shall be of metal or concrete, of the stair type extending to ground level, constructed throughout in a strong substantial manner and securely fixed to the building, except that wooden fire escapes are permitted to be used on buildings of combustible construction if all posts and brackets are not less than 89 millimetres in their least dimension and all other woodwork is not less than 38 millimetres in its least dimension."

This means that if my building is made of wood, then I can build a fire escape of wood as well. It simply doesn't make sense that when the building is on fire, the fire escape, which is supposed to provide a safe exit, is just as likely to be on fire.

I want to raise one concern, and this is the one I raised last time I spoke to this bill. The bill says: "Regulations made under subsections (1) and (2) are deemed to require that fire escapes, where permitted, be constructed of non-combustible material." My concern is with the words "where permitted." It would seem to me appropriate to say, regardless of whether they were permitted to be there or whether they weren't, whatever fire escapes are, we don't have wooden fire escapes, wherever they are. I think I mentioned last time that it seems silly that we have to have a steel one in case the building isn't really on fire, but if the building is all wood and it's in full flames, it's okay that the stairs are also in full flames. That just doesn't make sense.

I also have concern that if you leave the words "where permitted" in, if it's not saying that they have to be there, where it is not mandatory, municipalities could put in that they don't allow fire escapes and then they could put up wooden ones. Again, if they have to be metal, if they're not permitted to be wood, if they don't do anything, they can put in wooden ones. I hope that when the bill goes to committee this time, this is something that is considered to ensure we are preventing tragedy with wooden fire escapes.

Mr. Prue has related the tragic story of the fire that occurred in 1999 on Queen Street, and I want to once again extend my sympathies to the families of the victims of that fire. It was a horrible tragedy. I was a volunteer firefighter for 25 years. There were good days when we made a difference, helped an injured person or saved a life. There were also the days that we couldn't help, the days when we were too late or an accident was too bad.

Those days stay with you forever. I can only imagine what the firefighters in Toronto must have felt when they saw the wooden fire escape in flames. I can't imagine what people felt who needed the escape route.

While you cannot prevent every fire, I believe that these changes could reduce the number of tragedies in the future. I believe that this Legislature has a responsibility, not only to support this bill today but to ensure that it's moved forward quickly and does not die on the order paper. We need to ensure we are not back here in a year or two debating the same issue on this same bill. I think lives can be saved in the meantime. Can we imagine that there are many cases where it's possible that a life could have been saved if this bill had been passed the first time it was in this Legislature? I encourage everyone to support it and move it forward.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais remercier M. Michael Prue pour avoir amené ce projet de loi, Loi prévoyant que le code du bâtiment et le code de prévention des incendies sont réputés exiger des détecteurs d'incendie, des systèmes d'alerte d'incendie interconnectés et des sorties de secours incombustibles.

I wasn't around when this bill was introduced the first time and the second time, but I'm here now and I have a really difficult time understanding how something so obvious, something people have been putting forward since the year 2000, hasn't been accepted yet by this House. We heard the previous speaker say that all of the process has been followed: Mr. Prue introduced the bill, it went to committee and it received the support of the people in committee. Everybody is on board—the association of professional firefighters, the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs—and everybody agrees that this is a good bill, yet it doesn't go through. It doesn't become a law. It doesn't come into effect.

This is the kind of skepticism people sometimes have toward politicians. I think some of it is born in actions like these, in the lack of action. Why is it that when a private member brings something forward, a private bill that makes sense and that is supported by members of government—everybody on each side of the House today has spoken in favour of it. I'm hopeful it will go to committee, although it will be for us all to decide. I'm hopeful that this time will be the real time for it.

I know we have people here who have to live with the legacy of what it means not to have this kind of protection in effect in Ontario. The first part of the bill says, "Every residential building with two or more dwelling units is equipped with fire detectors in all public corridors and common areas of the building and interconnected fire alarms that are audible throughout the building." We all know that fire alarms and smoke detectors save lives. You can ask any kid from elementary school and they can rhyme it off: "Fire alarms save lives." The fire departments have big campaigns in all of their communities that, when you change your clock in the fall and when you change your clock in the spring, you change the battery in your smoke alarm. It would be even better if your smoke alarm was hard-wired through

your house. But if you take on this habit, it will save lives and it has saved a lot of lives.

1040

Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with Marc Gobbo and Mark Muldoon. Marc Gobbo is the president of the Sudbury Professional Firefighters Association and Mark Muldoon is on their executive. They came and talked to us about what firefighters want. What they want is basically to work themselves out of service. They want to make sure that everybody is safe. Sure, they'll be there if you need them, but they know that the more lead time you have, the better the outcome will be. Sometimes the outcome can be really bad, very drastic, and sometimes it leads to death.

Like the speaker before me, my husband, Keith Harris, is a firefighter. He has gone to many fires in his long career where the outcome has been really bad. When he comes home, he will always say, "The fire detector didn't work. The smoke alarm was disconnected," and those are the fires that turn out bad. What this bill is trying to do is make sure that this will not happen again. It is 100% preventable. All we have to do is pass this bill. Make it hard-wired. Make it interconnected. Make it so that if an apartment in the basement is on fire or is filled with smoke, then all of the exits don't fill up with smoke before the people on the second or third floor know about it. As the member mentioned before, most of those fires happen at night, when people are asleep. Most of the fatalities are not people burning to death; they are dying of smoke inhalation because the smoke alarm didn't go on, because there was no smoke alarm.

The second part of the bill says that every fire escape should be constructed of non-combustible material. Here again, why are we debating this? Isn't it common sense that a fire escape should be built of non-combustible material? It goes without saying.

So I'm going to give my support to this bill. I have a feeling that most of the people in this House will give it their support. It will go to committee. Here again, all of the professional associations will come out and say the bill is good the way it is. It will save lives. It will make a positive difference in the lives of people in Ontario. I hope this time is your lucky third time—it's the lucky third time for all of us—that it will come back to this House, it will become law, and the pain and suffering that some of the visitors in this House have gone through will be recognized in a positive way, that it brought something good out of something tragic that has continued to happen for the last seven years. Let's make sure that 2008 is the last time it ever happens in Ontario. Let's make sure this bill comes back to the House and that we as politicians do the right thing: that we do what's right for the people of Ontario and we pass Mr. Prue's Bill 14 and make it the law in Ontario.

C'est certainement mon plaisir ce matin de pouvoir amener mon appui au projet de loi 14, Loi prévoyant que le code du bâtiment et le code de prévention des incendies sont réputés exiger des détecteurs d'incendie, des systèmes d'alerte d'incendie interconnectés et des sorties de secours incombustibles.

La première partie de ce projet de loi dit que des détecteurs de fumée devraient être connectés dans tous les corridors et les sorties d'urgence pour permettre aux gens qui demeurent dans une même habitation de l'entendre. Souvent les feux se déclarent la nuit, pendant que les gens dorment. Lorsque les pompiers s'y rendent, ils vont nous dire que le résultat est tragique et drastique. Souvent ce n'est pas parce que les gens sont brûlés qu'ils vont mourir, c'est parce qu'ils vont respirer trop de fumée. Donc les gens meurent dans leur sommeil sans même s'en apercevoir. C'est tellement facile à prévenir : tout ce qu'on aurait à faire c'est de s'assurer de passer le projet loi, un projet de loi qu'on essaie de faire passer depuis l'année 2000. Ça fait sept ans qu'on essaie de faire passer quelque chose qui est tellement évident : d'avoir des détecteurs de fumée et d'avoir une sortie d'urgence qui n'est pas faite de matériel combustible.

Ça aussi est pas mal l'évidence lorsqu'on pense que la loi comme elle est en ce moment dit que les sorties d'urgence doivent être faites avec des 2 sur 4 et des 2 sur 8. Qu'est-ce qu'on est en train de faire là? On est en train de rajouter de l'huile sur le feu. On est en train de rajouter du matériel combustible à une situation qui est déjà explosive. Il me semble que ça va de l'évidence.

Ce projet de loi a été présenté une première fois, il s'est rendu en comité, il a passé en deuxième lecture, mais le gouvernement n'a pas cru bon de le ramener en Chambre pour en faire une loi. Il a été présenté une deuxième fois par M. Prue. Encore là, il s'est rendu en comité, il a reçu l'appui de l'Association des chefs pompiers, de l'Association des pompiers professionnels. C'est un bon projet de loi, mais encore là le gouvernement n'a pas jugé nécessaire de le ramener en Chambre.

Cette fois-ci, c'est la troisième fois. J'espère que la troisième fois va être plus chanceuse. C'est un bon projet de loi, c'est un projet de loi qui va prévenir des feux, qui va prévenir également du dommage autant aux habitants qu'aux habitations, et j'espère que cette fois-ci on va le respecter et que le gouvernement va juger bon de lui donner l'importance qu'il devrait avoir. Moi, je vais voter en faveur.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: First, thank you to Mr. Prue for bringing forward this bill. This gives us a good point of discussion.

I was very enthusiastic about this bill until just yesterday. I am less enthusiastic about this bill today, and I will be listening very intently to what Mr. Prue has to say about at least one of my questions.

As you know, this Bill 14 is to amend both the Building Code Act of 1992 and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act of 1997, and I only wish that Mr. Prue would have divided those two so we could have separate discussions on the Building Code Act and on the Fire Protection and Prevention Act.

As you know, as it stands right now, the FPPA is administered by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and already provides authority for standards that apply to fire safety.

What Mr. Prue is trying to accomplish—I am familiar with the City of Toronto Act. It says that interconnected systems must be applied in buildings of six units or more. Mr. Prue is trying to reduce that to two units, which is admirable and certainly has my support. The question that I have has to do with something that happened to me personally when I was invited to visit an eight-storey building in my riding. I was shocked to see that some of the interconnected systems and smoke detection systems were tampered with, almost to the point where in every fifth apartment that I visited personally it had been tampered with by the tenant. Either the unit was pulled out of the wall because it was deemed to be too sensitive—and, Mr. Prue, I would hope that we will have this discussion in committee—or too sensitive also in terms of smoke detection systems. In some cases they were not pulled out; in some cases the battery was missing. In some cases it was taped over. Why? Because these units had been manufactured in a too sensitive manner, and consequently they were sounding the alarm when no alarm was necessary.

So I would certainly support that part of the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, because it would indicate that Mr. Prue's intention here is to ensure that there must be a manufactured interconnected fire system to prevent tampering, and that discussion has to take place in committee. That discussion is necessary, because it's no use to talk about fire prevention systems when it's easy to pull out a battery or it's easy to pull out the equipment, and consequently, all this money spent on fire prevention is of no consequence. So I would hope that you will take that into account when the details of this bill are being discussed.

1050

The second part of my question—and this is really the reason why I may not be as excited and enthusiastic about supporting this bill. I was looking for the second time at Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*, and it struck me that Mr. Prue's bill, Bill 14, talks about wooden fire escapes. It's obvious that we don't want wooden fire escapes, because they keep burning. Even though there are treated woods that will delay the fire, that may be of little consequence to firefighters.

But in addition to fire escapes, let's look at what's on the ground in the city of Toronto. There are literally thousands upon thousands of decks and balconies that I see when I go onto any street in the city of Toronto. The question I have is this: Number one, are these wooden balconies or these wooden fire escapes—and remember, these are not steps. Fire escapes are not necessarily steps; fire escapes are balconies. They are exits away from a fire. I'm wondering, having looked at this bill—and I hope maybe there will be a discussion as well—if you are changing the wooden structures which have been treated to prevent fires or delay fires, and then you impose a law that says you have to now either do it in concrete or metal, will these be too heavy?

But what's even more important when I discuss the *Inconvenient Truth* movie by Al Gore is, what will be our

environmental footsteps of ensuring that all wooden structures now are having an effect on material that is not renewable? So I'm wondering, Mr. Prue, if you are able at all, in whatever way, to tell us what would be the environmental problem of replacing all of those. Now, I know you will tell us, "Well, it's a question of environment versus saving lives." That may be the case, and I'm very sensitive and happy that you would be making that argument, but you should also tell us in terms of the numbers what would be the effect on the environment.

Thank you very much, and I hope I'll be listening to Mr. Prue's response to this question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back to the Speaker's chair once again in this session.

It's a pleasure this morning to speak to the bill before us, Bill 14, the Fire Protection Statute Law Amendment Act, 2007, just for those of you at home who are viewing today. I congratulate the member from Beaches-East York again for bringing this forward in the Legislature and his tenacity on this issue. And welcome to the firefighters in the gallery today and those who have been here through the week, coming to our offices, explaining their concerns and putting the public safety of Ontarians foremost before us and what we can do to make the laws better.

This is one example of what we can do. We were disappointed, in the two times that it's been introduced, that it has not been moved forward. I encourage the government to certainly take this forward maybe a little bit more expediently than they did before.

I want to concur with my colleagues the member from Oxford and the member from Thornhill about the different aspects of the bill they have brought forward. I want to focus, in the short time I have, on the particular part of the bill in which Mr. Prue, under section one, indicates interconnected fire alarms that are audible, and in clauses 1(2.0.1)(b) and 2(1.1)(b) he reiterates that point.

The concern I want to bring forward is about people such as seniors or people who are deaf or hard of hearing in our communities who need strobe lighting and different devices in order to be alerted. I know my colleague the member from Pickering-Scarborough East did a private member's bill in the last session on visual fire alarms so I know that other members of the Legislature are aware of this.

I've had the opportunity to speak in my riding to Maggie Doherty-Gilbert, who represents the Canadian Hearing Society and does a fantastic job on that part. She's been to my office many times. She makes the point that one of the main focuses of the local health integration networks is to work at providing seniors with the dignity and independence of staying in their homes, and this includes those living in retirement residences and supportive housing. Statistics show that as many as 40%

of seniors in our community are either deaf or hard of hearing. So for most of those people, an audible fire alarm isn't sufficient to make them aware of the potential danger they may be faced with, so strobe alarms are what's needed in these cases. We have a variation of those strobe alarms in the Legislature, as we speak.

Surprisingly, strobe alarms and fire alarms are not covered under the assistive devices program, so there are financial hardships for these people in obtaining strobe alarms. The estimated cost is about \$100 per alarm, but it's the connection of the hard wiring and the many rooms that they will need; obviously, they need them in different rooms in their homes. That is the point we want to make: to look at strobe alarms that may be covered by the assistive devices program.

I want to make the point that the Legion in Clarington has just raised \$2,000 for a local situation in their riding. So I say, God bless the Legion for identifying that and for fundraising.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The New Democrats have three more minutes if they choose to use it.

If there's no further debate, I can recognize the member for Beaches-East York for up to five minutes, can I not? Agreed. The member for Beaches-East York in reply.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to thank the members for London-Fanshawe, Thornhill, Hamilton East, Brampton-Springdale, Oxford, Nickel Belt, Davenport and Victoria-Haliburton-Brock for their very serious and well-thought-out comments on this bill. I have up to five minutes, so I'd just like to deal with some of the concerns that they raised.

The member from London-Fanshawe spoke generally, but he spoke very well. He did remember the contents of the previous bill, and I thank him for having spoken to it in the past as well as today.

The member for Thornhill is a newcomer to the House, but he seized upon and understood immediately what the bill involved, particularly in terms of the firefighters. In my opening 10-minute remark, I did not have enough time to talk about the firefighters. But he was absolutely right: The firefighters put their health and their lives at risk each and every day. The firefighters are in support of this bill, not only because it will help them to do the job that they are paid for and that they have a passion to do—that is, saving lives—but it will also, in the long term, protect those brave men and women who have to go into burning buildings, to make them safer and to more often come home. We know that every year we mourn the loss of firefighters who have died in the line of duty going into burning buildings, some in the actual fire and some because of the inhalation of smoke and other toxins that is endemic to the profession.

The firefighters will be very much saved. Number one, when they get there, they will get there faster. If the alarm goes off—as it did in the case of the Queen Street fire, where it had to actually melt the wires to turn it on—they'll get there before, in the three or four minutes that

they endeavour to try to do in every single case, at least in large cities like the city of Toronto and Hamilton. When they get there, they will find that the residents have had an opportunity to leave the building, so they won't have to be running in trying to save people who are inside, because they'll already be outside. And last but not least, many times they will be able to have access to the rear or side entrances to gain access to the fire and be better able to put it out, rather than simply going in a front door. They won't be able to do that if there are wooden fire escapes. So I think this is a health and safety issue for them, and we need to pay attention to that.

The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is a newcomer, and he spoke briefly but well on the bill.

I applaud the efforts of the member from Brampton—Springdale. We've been working in tandem, even though we're in different parties, trying to get two aspects of the bills passed: one for older homes, which is my bill, and one for newer homes, which is hers. I hope she is going to bring her bill forward again.

The member from Oxford spoke in absolute detail. I was not aware till today, or did not remember, that he was a former firefighter.

I'd better skip down to the member from Davenport because I only have a couple of seconds left. Yes, we need the very best technology so that fire alarms don't go off when toast is burnt, even in the hall. They can be modified and should be modified.

1100

In terms of whether a wooden fire escape is better for the environment than a metal one, I can't tell you how much that's going to save, but I do know that the purpose of this bill is not so much environmental as it is life-saving. But I promise to try to get you that answer by the time this goes to committee.

The member from Victoria—Haliburton—Brock was talking about strobe alarms. I think inevitably that's possible. It is something that can be considered when the debate of the bill takes place in committee. Strobe alarms maybe won't work everywhere, but I don't think the technology is that far afield that it cannot be modified, and especially modified in places where people are hard of hearing. She has made a very good case and a very good suggestion in terms of retirement homes and homes where a lot of senior people might live, also where the deaf or hard of hearing might live, that strobe alarms be considered as well.

The difficulty with that—and I have to state—is because we're trying to do the public areas, not the areas inside the apartment. So if somebody is asleep and is hard of hearing, the strobe alarm would be outside the door. It would be in the hallway, as this is intended to do. It may have to be wired into their home if that's what they wish as well. I certainly have no difficulty with it being done.

The only argument that was raised in the past was an issue of cost. There were some landlords who owned properties who said they did not want to be involved in the cost. Well, the whole issue here is the cost of human

life. The whole issue is for the landlord to put in the fire escape. As fire escapes become redundant, they have to be replaced. Certainly, the bill contemplates that there can be a time frame for this to be done. It would not instantly become law, but there would be a time frame. As these old fire escapes are replaced, they would have to be replaced with non-combustible ones. This is all eminently doable.

I thank all members for their suggestions. I'm looking forward to your support today and to having this heard again in committee and passed at third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for this ballot item.

KATELYN BEDARD BONE MARROW AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2007

LOI KATELYN BEDARD DE 2007 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

Mr. Crozier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 5, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month / Projet de loi 5, Loi visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm prepared to recognize the member. He has 10 minutes for his leadoff presentation.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Like the bill we just finished debating and discussing, it's the second time that this bill has been presented. The first time was earlier this year, only in the last session of Parliament, and it received unanimous consent the morning it was debated. It was ordered for third reading but, unfortunately, because of the mysterious workings of this place, it did not get third reading finally and, as the saying goes, died on the order paper. I certainly hope it enjoys as much support as the last time, and more, and I hope this time it gets past third reading and is enacted.

As a matter of fact, it's a very short bill that carries a great message. The bill is only three paragraphs, and I would even read it. It declares: "The month of November in each year is hereby named Bone Marrow Awareness Month." The act would come into effect and force on the day it receives royal assent, if it is passed. But importantly in this case too, the short title of the bill is the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act, 2007.

This bill was created with the inspiration provided by Katelyn Bedard and her parents, Joanne and Bryan. They are founders of the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association. They live in Windsor just outside of my riding. Beautiful and lively Katelyn lost her battle with leukemia at the tender age of three and a half, when she was unable to find a match within the bone marrow registry for the life-saving donation that she needed. That is the reason that in Katelyn's memory—for her so-short life and her

battle against leukemia—we have named this the Katelyn Bedard bone marrow bill.

After losing Katelyn, her parents decided to make it their mission to encourage more people to join the bone marrow registry, so that no other child, and in fact no other person, would have to experience the pain that Katelyn and her family did when they couldn't find a match. I quote Bryan Bedard: "Having Bone Marrow Awareness Month declared will bring added legitimacy to our cause.... With hundreds of Canadians needing a bone marrow transplant each year, it is imperative that people educate themselves about the bone marrow registry and add their name to the list of potential donors to bring hope to those that desperately need to find a match to save their life."

The bone marrow transplant is a procedure that's required when a patient's own bone marrow is destroyed because of the use of high doses of chemotherapy or radiation. For many people suffering from diseases such as leukemia, a bone marrow transplant is the only hope of any long-term survival. A transplant requires matching tissue types between the patient and donor. More often, I suppose, this is found in related donors and patients, but in those cases where even the related donor and patient can't find a match—that's why we need to make bone marrow donation a much broader scope, so that the chances of finding someone are increased.

These tissue types are inherited, but 70% of patients don't have a matched donor in their family. These people rely on the kindness of strangers who have volunteered to donate their bone marrow through the national bone marrow registry. But sadly, the demand for life-saving bone marrow transplants far outweighs the matches found in the registry. Again, bringing awareness to the need for bone marrow donors will increase the size of the registry and therefore increase the chances of needy patients finding a bone marrow match.

I hope that the memory of little Katelyn Bedard inspires people to register to donate their bone marrow. There are plenty of people in my own riding whom we would like to encourage to do this.

In order to help the patients, and others around the world, as a matter of fact, find compatible, committed and healthy unrelated donors, the Unrelated Bone Marrow Donor Registry was established in 1989 by the Canadian Red Cross Society and assumed by the Canadian Blood Services in 1998. The success of the registry, as I have said and will emphasize, depends on people who are willing to sign up to provide the gift of life to someone who's not related to them. While many patients have received a life-saving bone marrow transplant from a donor found through the registry, many others continue to search for this miracle each month.

I will admit that I have not yet registered. The only thing that's preventing me from doing so is finding the closest clinic that I can go to. But it's a very simple process. There is simply a blood sample taken, and then that blood sample is recorded for those technical things that they need to know in order to match it with a patient

who needs a bone marrow transplant. Your name is in the registry, and if someone who's seeking this kind of life-saving help finds the qualities of your blood to be that match, then you are asked to give a bone marrow transplant and that process is carried out. So with little inconvenience and certainly little discomfort, many of us could help save lives.

1110

After all, we are here on this planet together to, I think, from time to time, make large sacrifices in order to save someone's life. But in this case, it's such a small sacrifice, and yet it can mean so much. It would mean an awful lot—although she's not with us—to little Katelyn, I'm sure. The short time that she was here, it would make that little life of hers mean so much more if, through this, and in her name, we could encourage more people to register to be a bone marrow contributor.

So I ask for the support of my colleagues here this morning. It received unanimous support when we debated it earlier this year in the former Parliament. I ask you to support this bill so that come next November, when they can take a month to call their own and bring this issue to the fore, all of us can feel proud that in some little way we helped to bring that awareness to those around us who don't know about it, and subsequently, because of that, increase the size of the bone marrow registry. With that increase in numbers comes a better chance that a life will be saved.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to rise today in the debate on Bill 5. I think that when we look at this issue in a broader societal context, what we're really looking at is balancing the success of medical science in being able to provide answers with public awareness and understanding. This is an ongoing issue. It certainly always has new facets of challenge for the public and for medical science.

I think back to the point in time when we were in government and we embarked on a public awareness program to increase organ donation. I recall at that time that I think most of us embraced the notion, particularly when we found out that Canadians were reticent to sign up for organ donation, and we had relatively, in comparison to other jurisdictions, a very small percentage. So again, it was the question of creating opportunities to build that awareness and to improve the percentage of potential donors.

I must say that I thought it was a very clear public message, but I did have a constituent who phoned me in great agitation because somehow she thought that this initiative implied that there was going to be some obligation on her part to be engaged in organ donation. I had to assure her that, no, it was a question of public awareness. I offer that anecdote simply to remind people that the challenge here, first of all, is in supporting the research we are proud to have in this country that provides us with avenues for this kind of donation. But it behooves us as public figures, then, to encourage and promote public awareness and understanding.

Maybe it's a feature of my age, but it seems to me that we have pushed the boundaries of medical science in those particular areas. I think back to the availability of successful organ transplants, and now we look at tissue, cell, cord blood. These are all huge innovations in the area of being able to treat medical conditions, very life-threatening medical conditions. The issue for us today, then, is matching that medical success with this ongoing public awareness and understanding. The challenge, I think, is understandable because of the fact that around us constantly are medical science achievements. People tend to think, "Well, it's not something that affects me; I'm not directly involved," so they're not as likely to make themselves aware of the issues and the opportunities that in fact save lives.

I'm reminded of the personal story from my neighbours, who discovered, obviously in a very traumatic way, when their seven-month-old baby was diagnosed with leukemia—when he was diagnosed and the medical profession were looking for options that might be of assistance to him, they were pleased to note that he had three siblings but, very sadly, none of those siblings provided an opportunity for a bone marrow match, and certainly the fact that he had cousins as well—they were not able to find a match within the immediate family.

This created huge angst on the part of my neighbours, because obviously they understood that their child's chance of survival would be significantly enhanced by the opportunity of having a bone marrow transplant. In speaking to Hudson's parents, their appreciation of the kind of technology and research that exists today became clear to me, and they wanted to convey the importance that people's lives are saved, that it is money well spent.

When we look at the whole bone marrow process, one of the things that I think becomes very clear is the chance of how successful it is to find a match: It's estimated that it's one in 750,000 people. When you consider that, according to a Toronto Star article in October 2006, there are only about 230,000 people in Canada who are registered, it gives you some kind of idea of the kind of urgency that the member from Essex referred to in being a part of that registry.

I think as well that when you look at the support program that has been provided through this Katelyn Bedard foundation, it's also something that needs to be recognized, because when I look at the delivery of the terrible news for my neighbours about their seven-month-old and having to deal with that kind of message, the kind of support that they required from family, from friends, from neighbours, from the community at large, was enormous. As a seven-month-old, of course, he went to Sick Children's in Toronto, and had to have his mother with him most of the time. So there's a huge strain, and I think that recognizing the work of this foundation in providing that kind of support is extremely important.

So I want to offer congratulations to the member for Essex, Mr. Crozier, in the reintroduction of this bill, because I think that it goes a long way to building that awareness that we need to share. We need to make

people more conscious of the opportunities and, frankly, the good work of this foundation.

1120

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I thank the member from Nickel Belt for allowing me to speak at this time. I can tell you that I'm truly honoured to stand in this House and speak to this particularly vital bill, the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act. I would also like to extend my appreciation and my gratitude to my colleague from the riding of Essex, Bruce Crozier, for proposing this act and actively lobbying on its behalf for the families that have been most affected by the illness through this tragedy.

The story of Katelyn Bedard is truly a sad and very heartbreaking tale. For a child of three years old to have to suffer through and ultimately succumb to an illness such as leukemia is a true tragedy. Even more tragic is the fact that Katelyn may have been able to survive such a critical illness had she been able to receive a matching donor for her bone marrow transplant. She did not, and now we must strive forward in trying to fix the system and attempt to influence more Ontarians to become bone marrow and organ donors. A story like Katelyn's will often help in bringing an issue as serious as this to the public consciousness. I hope this bill will do the same and that, out of such immense tragedy, there will be hope for others who will come behind Katelyn to not have to suffer the illness that could have been avoided through organ and bone marrow transplants.

Katelyn's parents, Bryan and Joanne, have served the honour of Katelyn by creating and dedicating themselves to the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association. This association's goal is to promote awareness about worldwide bone marrow registries and to educate about bone marrow donation in an attempt to further encourage adults to consider joining the bone marrow donation registry in hope of saving the life of someone else suffering from this illness. This is truly admirable of the Bedards. I speak for others in the Legislature in suggesting how important and commendable their work on this mission is and how proud of themselves they should be for striving to help others to avoid the tragedy that has befallen their family.

On that note I would also like to relate a similar story about organ donations from a very special individual from my riding. Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to meet Ann Miller. Ann is a resident of the riding of Huron-Bruce, and she was at the Legislature, as a part of National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week last April as a representative of the Gift of Life Association.

Ms. Miller had been struck by a tragedy: Both her son Joel and her nephew were killed in automobile accidents within a very short time of one another. Ann's son was an organ donor, and his donation went to help give other people the gift of life. Ann's son was enshrined in the Gift of Life Association quilt that honours transplant donors and recipients. Through the tragedy of losing her son and her nephew, Ann has become a tireless advocate

for the Gift of Life Association. She travels around the province with the organization, telling her story in hope that it will drive those who have not signed up for organ donation to do so in order to save a life.

I'm certain that many, if not all, of the members of the Legislature could share a story of a constituent or a friend or a family member who has been touched by a tragedy like my constituent Ann Miller.

To conclude, this bill proposed by the member from Essex is being presented as a bill that could help lead to saving the lives of people faced with similar circumstances like Katelyn Bedard. If this bill will help to save even one life, I cannot imagine how it could not receive full support from this Legislature. I'm certain that every member in this House would agree that more needs to be done to help promote bone marrow and organ donation across this province. Because these donations can make a difference, a decision between life and death, in many instances. We need to do what we can as representatives of the province of Ontario. We need to push this issue and we need to become advocates for bone marrow and organ donation.

So once again, to the member from Essex, you deserve a great deal of credit and respect from this Legislature for being on the front lines of this issue and bringing awareness not only from your riding but from across the province. To the people that I represent, I thank you for all of your hard work, and I will support this bill.

Ms. Laurie Scott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce the grade 10 class from the Lindsay Collegiate and Vocational Institute, the students and the teachers. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly pleased to join this debate on Bill 5, the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act, that's been introduced by our Liberal colleague from Essex. I'd like to congratulate him. He's reintroduced a bill that he felt very strongly about before in this Legislature. As we've heard, it has been inspired by Katelyn Bedard. Unfortunately, she lost her battle with leukemia because there was no match in the bone marrow registry. Certainly, her parents since then have done whatever they can to encourage all Ontarians to join the bone marrow registry.

I think sometimes we don't realize that each one of us could do a lot. We know that in certain instances we have the opportunity to donate blood; in some instance we have the opportunity to donate our organs. But we also have the opportunity to donate our bone marrow, and it is extremely important that people become aware of the fact that this is something that they can do. I think particularly at this time of the year, people sometimes are looking to do something that would benefit others, not just in this province or this country but throughout the world. And really, the success of the registry that we have depends on people who are willing to sign up to provide the gift of life to someone who is not related to them. While many patients have received a life-saving bone marrow

transplant from a donor found through the registry, there are many, many others throughout the world who continue to search for their miracle match. Each one of us would be devastated to know that we have a life-threatening disease that could be cured if only the right person had joined the bone marrow registry.

I hope this bill, as it's reintroduced today, will be supported, will be passed. Even our discussion today, I hope, will raise the awareness of the need for people to participate in donating bone marrow.

I think it's important to also remember that we need people from all ethnic backgrounds to be participating. If we take a look at the Canadian bone marrow registry, we will see that many people of backgrounds other than Caucasians are vastly under-represented. It says here that there are approximately 230,000 Canadians registered: 83% of them are Caucasian, 1% aboriginal, 0.5% African-Canadian, 3.6% Asian, 1.6% East Indian and 0.3% Hispanic. We know that if we're going to be matching these donors to the transplant, they need to be of the same ethnicity. So certainly we need to encourage all people, and it's really important to raise awareness. This is an issue that isn't always talked about.

1130

I went on the website of the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association, and there was a note there from Judy Fortier of Lavigne, Ontario. She joined the registry 12 years ago and she says it's "Easy to register. Good for the soul."

Lisa Beneteau of Amherstburg says she did it to honour her husband, who had a transplant in May. She goes on to say that it's so easy; people need to be educated on how easy it really is.

There's someone from my community, Steven McEvoy, who has belonged to the registry for 16 years. He has donated twice.

There's a Kim Dwight of Strathroy, who writes that she has recently joined the registry because she wants to make her existence in this world useful to others.

There are Jennifer and Ryan from London, who have joined to honour a loved one's memory, and they hope to help somebody else.

There's a Celeste Breault from LaSalle, who says, "I joined when I heard about Katelyn Bedard. I went to school with her parents and it really hit home.... I realized that even if I wasn't a match for her, I could still help save someone's life."

Then there is Donita Des Rosiers from Windsor, who writes that she was at a Nascar race in Michigan and there was a booth set up by the national bone marrow donor program. Both she and her husband signed up on the spot.

Then there's Rosanna Brazil, who writes that she joined the registry in 1996 because a girl named Natasha was looking for a bone marrow transplant, and that a year before, a girl at her school had died suddenly from AML leukemia.

So you know what? There are many, many people who have made the decision to become a donor. I know

that recently there was a resident in Kitchener, my community, who was looking for a bone marrow transplant. He wasn't able to find a matching donor in the registry. His family was originally from Nicaragua and, as I think was pointed out to you, there weren't too many donors of Hispanic background, and he was quite desperate.

To those people who are watching today, I hope that a gift that you will consider making this Christmas is to register. You may be called upon at some point to give the gift of life to somebody else. Again, congratulations to my colleague on introducing this bill again.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Il me fait plaisir, moi aussi, de parler en faveur de la Loi visant à désigner le mois de novembre Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse.

Chaque année des centaines de personnes en Ontario ont besoin d'une greffe de moelle osseuse pour lutter contre des maladies, des maladies qui souvent sont mortelles. Cependant, moins de 30 % de ces gens trouveront un donneur de cellules souches parmi les membres de leur famille même si on inclut là-dedans les familles étendues. Un donneur non apparenté qu'on ne connaît pas est la seule source de moelle osseuse disponible pour la majorité des gens qui attendent le don de moelle osseuse.

Donc, un registre de donneurs non apparentés de moelle osseuse a été créé en 1989, ça fait quand même pas mal longtemps de ça, par la Société de la Croix-Rouge. Plus tard, ça a été prise en charge par la Société canadienne de sang, en 1998. Le registre vise à aider les gens qui ont besoin d'une greffe de moelle osseuse à trouver quelqu'un, un donneur compatible non apparenté, partout dans le monde.

On est, nous les politiciens ici à Queen's Park, dans une position privilégiée pour s'assurer que ce message-là se répand à la grandeur de la province. Pour ceux qui écoutent à la télé, puis certainement si on appuie ce projet de loi, on aura la chance de faire une différence concrète dans la vie de centaines de personnes. Par contre, le succès du registre repose largement sur ceux qui acceptent de se porter volontaires pour offrir le don de vie à une personne qui n'a aucun lien de parenté avec eux. Si de nombreuses personnes en attente ont pu recevoir une greffe de moelle osseuse essentielle à leur survie, c'est parce que le registre a permis de trouver un donneur et que, par miracle, cette personne-là était compatible. Par contre, c'est difficile et on a besoin que plus de gens participent.

Pour stimuler la participation, la Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association a été mise en place en 2005. L'association vise à faire connaître le registre des donneurs de moelle osseuse du monde entier pour que tout le monde sache où un donneur potentiel puisse se trouver. Ça sert également à renseigner le public sur le don de moelle osseuse et attirer l'attention sur le besoin urgent de donneurs de moelle osseuse et d'encourager tous les adultes à s'inscrire au registre.

L'inscription est facile. Les gens pensent, quant à la moelle osseuse, que l'on parle d'une chirurgie ou des os

ou quoi que ce soit. Pas du tout; ce n'est pas ça. C'est une simple prise de sang. Même pour ceux qui ont peur des aiguilles, je vous garantie que ça ne fait pas mal. Allez-y. Vous ne le regretterez pas. Même mon collègue n'aura pas peur.

La désignation du mois de novembre comme Mois de la sensibilisation au don de moelle osseuse appuie à la fois les activités de la Société canadienne du sang et celle de la Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association, en attirant l'attention sur la nécessité d'accroître le nombre de donneurs volontaires, afin d'accroître les chances de trouver un donneur de moelle osseuse compatible pour tous ceux qui sont en attente d'une greffe.

Je crois que ce sont des motifs très honorables. Je suis sûre qu'on a tous connu quelqu'un qui avait soit le cancer, un lymphome ou une autre maladie sérieuse qui était en attente d'une moelle osseuse et qui n'a pas reçu ce don de vie. Moi-même, j'ai perdu un ami il y a deux ans, M. Michel Galipeau, qui lui aussi aurait eu besoin d'une moelle osseuse et a subi des complications. On est tous dans des situations comme ça, on connaît tous quelqu'un, et en passant ce projet de loi, on peut faire une différence. Donc certainement, les néo-démocrates voteront en faveur de ce projet de loi. J'espère que le travail de comité va se faire et que ce projet de loi soit ramené en troisième lecture, pour être appuyé par cette Chambre et pour être sûr qu'il devienne loi. Nous avons la chance ici de faire une différence dans la vie de centaines de personnes. Il ne faudrait pas la laisser passer.

As politicians, we are in a leadership position. We have an opportunity here to pass a bill that will make a tremendous difference in the lives of hundreds of people waiting for bone marrow transplants. Let's make sure we take this leadership responsibility seriously. Let's make sure that this bill goes to second reading, goes to committee and comes back to this House and becomes the law. We will have an opportunity to make sure more people register and make a big contribution to people who are waiting for bone marrow transplants.

The season of giving is upon us. It would certainly be a nice gesture to call up your local hospital and make a donation. You won't regret it. You will feel better about it.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I want to thank the member for Essex for introducing this private member's bill, the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Awareness Month Act.

Katelyn Bedard today is asking us to donate our bone marrow through the National Bone Marrow Registry. But I think at the same time Katelyn Bedard would want us, as members of Parliament, to be leaders and examples of how to live a healthy and gifted life. Is there something we can do to ensure that we do that? Yes: a proper diet, go easy on fats and sugars, increase amounts of fruits, vegetables and grains, and don't forget your vitamins. There are mineral supplements because our foods may be lacking in them. Physical exercise should be a must— aerobics, walking, cycling—and certainly getting enough sleep, which is something all MPPs need more of.

1140

But there is one dimension that seems to be missing as well to a healthy life that Katelyn Bedard is asking of us today, and that is the emotions. What are the effects of our emotions on our health? That of course is the new science called psychoneuroimmunology, which shows the connection between your mind, the nervous system and the immune system.

Why is this important? We know that the stress that most people feel has a negative effect on our lives, especially sitting here and listening to some of the speeches; that could certainly increase a lot of stress. But it is important, because I ran across a very interesting article in the journal of the Archives of General Psychiatry from December 2005. This study shows that the effects of an argument between spouses have a negative aspect on your health. The new study shows that arguments between spouses slow down your body's ability to heal a wound. Dr. Ronald Glaser of Ohio State University found that having these kinds of negative interactions between people—everyday, hostile relations with your spouse—is changing your body's immune system as you grow older.

The study shows clearly that only one half-hour argument with a spouse reduced the immune system's mechanism to heal a wound by one day; imagine that. A big, strong argument with your spouse reduces your immune system, and consequently it reduces the ability to heal a wound by one day. In short, as hostile arguments between couples increase, the body's ability to repair a wound decreases. That is the power of this new science called psychoneuroimmunology, and it shows that it has a direct effect on the immune system.

How does this relate to Bone Marrow Awareness Month? Bone marrow is the factory of production of red and white blood cells, and they have, obviously, a direct impact on the immune system. Consequently, in order to live a healthy, gifted life—because what is life but a gift, really—we have to try to ensure that we understand this kind of relationship. The body of evidence is growing that the emotional content, the stress we feel every day, has a direct impact on our health.

So what's the science? Let's look at Joan Borysenko, who says that the mind-body relationship is entering a new level in scientific understanding. She talks about how belief and imagination can unlock the mystery of healing. Dr. Carl Simonton pioneered the use of guided imagery for cancer patients, and he runs the Simonton Cancer Center in Pacific Palisades in California. Dr. Dean Ornish, University of California, advocates the use of meditation to reverse the effects of heart disease. Karen Olness, Bernie Siegel—Dr. Hamer of Germany discovered after 40,000 case studies that almost every disease is caused by a shock experience of stress.

In short, while we're discussing the whole issue of Bone Marrow Awareness Month, we must also show some leadership in terms of introducing a gifted and healthy life and some leadership to show the rest of the world how we can live a gifted life.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm delighted today to speak in support of An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month, which has been introduced by my colleague Mr. Crozier. This is a very important topic and something that is very near and dear to my heart. I have actually been tested and I am, I think, on the bone marrow registry.

As some of my colleagues know, my brother was diagnosed with aplastic anemia 10 years ago. This is a disease that strikes one in a million people, and in order to be treated for it, he required a bone marrow transplant. My siblings and I were all tested. My older brother was as close a match as we could find, although not a perfect match, and underwent the transplant. I have to say for my colleagues and for those who are watching that being tested and being put on the registry is a completely, as my colleague from Nickel Belt stated, painless undertaking, one that takes very little time and that could alter somebody's life forever.

My older brother was the bone marrow donor. When in fact you are called to be a donor, it is, again, a fairly uninvasive procedure. It is somewhat painful, although you recover very quickly. My younger brother received the bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately, over the following two and a half years, there were complications, and he did pass away in 2000. Although this has been a very difficult time for my family, and it's a very personal issue for me, I wanted to take the opportunity today to talk about it, to encourage people to get themselves on the registry because, again, it is painless, it takes very little time, and it can ultimately change someone's life dramatically.

In my hometown, I also have a little girl named Julie Perrotta. She is my friend Rosalba Perrotta's niece, and Julie was also diagnosed with aplastic anemia. Again, one of those shocking statistics, that it strikes one in a million, but I happen to know two.

Julie was seven when she was struck with aplastic anemia, and spent a great deal of time at Sick Kids hospital, as we did at Princess Margaret at around the same time. She's now 15. Julie was able to find a bone marrow donor on the registry. After all of her family, her relatives, her extensive Italian family were tested, they were unable to find a perfect match. But they found a stranger in Ohio, of all places, who matched perfectly with Julie, who went through the donation of her bone marrow and we had a successful transplant. Julie today is 15 years old, a high school student in North Bay and thriving. So, again, by the generosity of a total stranger thousands of miles away, this little girl in North Bay is now living a perfectly normal life. It's a very happy tale.

So I just wanted to take the opportunity today to support Mr. Crozier in his bill, to support the creation of the month of November as Bone Marrow Awareness Month, because it is an issue that touches so many people. While these diseases—leukemia, aplastic anemia and other autoimmune deficiency diseases—strike what seems to be a few people, everyone who has spoken this morning has had some kind of personal contact or awareness of

someone who has required a bone marrow transplant. There is a demand out there. There are people who are dying because they cannot find that match.

If this woman in Ohio hadn't taken the time to be tested and put herself on the registry, Julie wouldn't be here today. So I am here today to speak to the fact that, having been tested, having been put on the registry, it is painless, it takes very little time, and it really can change somebody's life.

I'm hoping today that we are all able to support this. It is, as the member for Kitchener talked about, a season of giving. I think it's important that we see this as a gift that anyone can give. It has no monetary value but it has a huge value in the impact on somebody's life. I want to encourage everyone to support this bill and to support Mr. Crozier in his endeavour to raise the awareness and to ensure that everyone across the province is aware of the fact that they can be on the registry. It's so simple, it's so easy, and it has such a dramatic impact.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? That concludes the debate on this item. The member for Essex has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I want to thank the members for York-Simcoe, Huron-Bruce, Kitchener-Waterloo, Nickel Belt, Davenport and Nipissing for their contribution to our discussion of this bill this morning.

With that, I just want to read something from the website of the Katelyn Bedard Bone Marrow Association:

"If only there had been a donor for Katie.

"Katie was such a precious little girl. She loved to sing songs, make crafts and play games with her brother and cousins. She was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia (AML) not long after her second birthday. After treatment with chemotherapy, the leukemia went into remission but it eventually came back, just days before her third birthday. The only thing that could cure her of this life-threatening disease was a bone marrow transplant.

"Sadly, nobody in the bone marrow registry was a match for Katie. She never received the bone marrow transplant she desperately needed, and in June 2005, little Katie earned her angel wings. She was only three and a half years old.

"If only there had been a match for Katie in the bone marrow registry. If only more people were aware of the desperate need for bone marrow donors. Please help.

"Join the bone marrow registry today.

"Spread the word.

"Tell your friends and family."

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): According to the standing orders, I am now compelled to suspend the proceedings of the House until 12 noon.

The House suspended proceedings from 1150 to 1200.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

We will first deal with ballot item 3, which is standing in the name of Mr. Prue.

FIRE PROTECTION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT À LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Prue has moved second reading of Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to have this matter referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall this bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy? Agreed? Agreed.

We will next deal with ballot item 4, which is standing in the name of Mr. Crozier.

KATELYN BEDARD BONE MARROW AWARENESS MONTH ACT, 2007

LOI KATELYN BEDARD DE 2007 SUR LE MOIS DE LA SENSIBILISATION AU DON DE MOELLE OSSEUSE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 5, An Act to make the month of November Bone Marrow Awareness Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I would seek unanimous consent that the bill be ordered for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is there unanimous consent to order the—

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I heard a no.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: I ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Shall this bill be referred to the standing committee on justice policy? Agreed? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1330.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2008, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: The McGuinty government's "Don't worry; be happy" approach is breaking the back of rural Ontario: on the front page of the Ontario Farmer, "Pork and Beef Farmers Ask for Help." Farmers are losing \$65 per finished pig and \$350 to \$400 for fed cattle. Surging government-policy-driven feed prices, rocketing European pork export subsidies and the Canadian dollar spell disaster. Our cattlemen predict losses of more than \$100 million in the last half of this year, and many hog and beef farmers fall through the cracks of CAIS.

When the pork sector faced disaster nine years ago, our government announced funding and it went into their hands within 40 days. Today's farmers have been waiting a lot longer for this agriculture minister to speak up.

Greenhouse fruit and vegetable growers are feeling the heat as well. Surely the minister knows their concerns on energy costs, minimum wage increases and regulatory restrictions ripping their bottom lines. Again, government has caused this; government must fix it.

Tobacco farm families have suffered a market meltdown. Jacked-up tobacco taxes and a smoke-free Ontario war on tobacco see government sitting idly by as families lose their farms, lose their houses and lose their livelihood.

Pork, beef, tobacco and hogs are reeling in the wake of McGuinty government policy, regulations and programs or lack thereof. Will this government finally announce help in this fall's economic statement?

RIDING OF ALGOMA-MANITOULIN

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I stand today to reflect on the year 2007 in the beautiful and vast riding of Algoma-Manitoulin.

During the year, we have seen the coming into production of the largest wind farm in Canada at Prince township in the Algoma district. We've seen remarkable improvements to the ski hill in Manitouwadge in the Thunder Bay district. We've seen significant improvements to the waterfronts at Gore Bay and Little Current in the Manitoulin district. We've seen improvements for the first time in over 30 years to the overpass that crosses the CPR main line at Chapleau in the Sudbury district.

We've seen new family health teams created in Wawa, Elliot Lake, Espanola and Little Current. We've seen the literal rising from the ashes of the Haavaldsrud lumber company at Hornepayne. We've seen 16 kilometres of four-lane highway opened in Algoma, just east of Sault Ste. Marie. We've seen the building of a long-overdue water treatment plant at White River in the district of Algoma. We've seen a \$9-million refit of the Chi-Cheemaun ferry, which travels between Tobermory and South Baymouth.

Community after community have made much progress. We've also seen difficult times in the forest industry.

I want to take this opportunity to wish all those in Algoma-Manitoulin a Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year from my dedicated staff and from our family. Best of the season.

LEGISLATIVE REFORM

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "We get it," to quote my daughter's favourite heroine, Dora the Explorer. Welcome to the 21st century. We finally made it. The composition of this Legislature today is so different than it was 200 years ago. We've got more young men, we've got young women, and we've got members from different linguistic, regional, religious and cultural backgrounds.

On Tuesday this past week we all stood together. Regardless of gender, party or region, we unanimously rallied together to make this place more reflective of who we are and where we are going as a province. By unanimously supporting a government motion inspired by a resolution I tabled over a week ago, we have recognized that each member of this Legislature is more than just a politician. By forming an all-party panel with the intent of making the Legislature more family friendly, I think we've embraced a new era of thinking in this place.

This is an important time in the history of this institution. We have been recognized as stewards of this place and we must also modernize it to keep up with the times and make the systemic changes so that this Legislature will be more appealing to all men and to all women who are called to public service.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your support of this initiative as well as all members, and in particular all of our families, who love this province as much as we do.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: On November 27, the Ontario government officially committed an investment of over \$3 million in my riding of York South-Weston to establish a new satellite community health centre for Weston-Mount Dennis, an area identified as one of 13 Toronto neighbourhoods most in need of improved community infrastructure, according to the United Way Strong Neighbourhoods report.

The community health centre approach is vital to our public health care system. It brings health care to the

neighbourhoods where people may have difficulty accessing primary health care due to barriers such as language, culture, physical disabilities, homelessness, poverty or geographic isolation.

Community health centres, or CHCs, are non-profit organizations funded by the government of Ontario and community partners who make up health teams that include traditional medical personnel such as physicians, nurse practitioners and nurses who work alongside counsellors, community workers and dietitians.

Under the sponsoring agency of York Community Services, the Weston-Mount Dennis satellite CHC will be an umbrella group where residents can find medical as well as social and mental health programs all in one place.

I look forward to working with York Community Services and the Ministry of Health to ensure that the needs of low-income earners and seniors of York South-Weston will be met.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Randy Hillier: In 2001, the Harris government gave the people of Ontario confidence in the safety and quality of the food on their tables. However, under the same legislation, the McGuinty government has jeopardized our food supply and put rural Ontario and small business on notice once again.

Over-zealous agents are using this same legislation to eliminate local food suppliers that we have relied on for generations. The Premier thinks it's safer for me to buy steak from Argentina than from the Beckwith Butcher in Lanark county. In 2006, the McGuinty government put farmers' markets and church suppers in the crosshairs, and now the butcher shop is on the block. The minister of rural affairs talks about cost-sharing, but in the real world cost-sharing means bankruptcy.

The relentless attacks on rural values and the rural economy by the McGuinty government are consistent and despicable. In Ontario's butcher shops, food safety is their livelihood. For the McGuinty government, however, food safety is an attack on the family business and the cultural institutions that have been our bedrock.

With our tax dollars, the government tells us to "Buy Ontario." But under this government, there will be no one left to buy from.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Michael Prue: Last May, approximately seven months ago, I posed a question in this House to the then Minister of Government Services. I asked the minister what he was going to do in terms of the Tarion Corp., what kinds of actions he was willing to take, how he was going to act in order to protect homeowners in Ontario.

At that time, the answer was not forthcoming, and over the last seven months there has been no answer forthcoming from the McGuinty government—absolutely none whatsoever. People who have bought these homes and who are dissatisfied with these homes continue to write to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Most recently, Karen Somerville has written too to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, who, I must say, has brushed her off. In his last paragraph of a very, very truncated and short letter back to Ms. Somerville, he writes: "I note from your correspondence that you have already sent your request for information to representatives of the township of Rideau Lakes and to the Honourable Jim Watson, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to whom I must defer." So, he is not willing to intervene on the behalf of consumers either.

1340

If the Liberal Party wants to see the worst case of this abuse, I suggest that they go and talk to your former candidate in the township of Rideau Lakes, Lori Bryden, who is the living nightmare of all that this party refuses to do for consumers.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise in the House today to ask a question: Why is the federal government making a worker living in Ontario worth less than a worker living in any other province? Specifically, I'm talking about the federal government's ongoing refusal to provide Ontario workers with equitable funding for employment insurance benefits and job training.

Last year, the average unemployed worker in Ontario received \$4,000 less in funding for regular EI benefits when compared to the average unemployed person in the rest of Canada. If Ontario's unemployed were to receive fair treatment in regular EI benefits, they would have received about \$1.7 billion more in benefits last year alone.

Not only that, but 70% of Ontario's unemployed workers do not qualify for EI and are therefore excluded from EI-funded training programs. If Ontario was treated fairly and received the same funding for job training as other provinces, there would be an additional \$314 million annually to support Ontario workers to upgrade their skills.

Ontario workers deserve the same opportunities as other Canadians to improve their skills, to find meaningful work and to contribute to Canada's prosperity. I call upon all members of this House to press the federal government to end this unfair practice to the people of the province of Ontario.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mr. David Zimmer: I rise to talk today about the McGuinty Liberals' \$17.5-billion rapid transit action plan for greater Toronto and the Hamilton area. The plan, Move Ontario 2020, tackles gridlock by building a modern transit system that will move people and goods quickly and efficiently to ensure we can attract and keep thousands of good, high-paying jobs.

Over the summer, John Tory called this plan a political ploy. I don't think the people of Ontario, who are going to benefit by the 175,000 jobs, would agree

with him on that point. The plan will build over 900 kilometres of new and improved rapid transit, create two rapid transit lines across Hamilton, and help realize Toronto's transit city vision for light rail transit across the city.

Mr. Tory can call it a ploy, but let's not forget that it was his party that allowed Ontario's infrastructure to crumble because of inadequate investments in our highway system. It was Mr. Tory's party that in 1998 cut transit funding to 0% and then, in 2002 when they resumed transit funding, it came in at less than half of the original level. The Conservative Party's 2001 investment plan provided only \$3.25 billion in funding for transit over a 10-year period. That's less than our government has spent in the last three years.

The McGuinty Liberals' Move Ontario 2020—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOLIDAY MESSAGES

Mr. Jeff Leal: I rise in the House today to wish my colleagues and all Ontarians happy holidays. Whether you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah or Kwanza or the Hajj, this festive time of year is a special time to be with family and friends, and it's also time to reflect on another year past. I encourage Ontarians to reflect on how fortunate we are to live in the best province in the greatest country in the world, and in the everyday hustle and bustle of our daily lives, I ask Ontarians to remember to give and share with those less fortunate.

As this is the time of year for celebrations and holiday cheer, it's important that we all ensure that we and our family and friends are safe in their travels. I remind Ontarians that if they drink, they should not risk the lives of themselves or others by driving. Please take a taxi or public transit, or use the services of the dedicated individuals at Operation Red Nose.

We all cherish this time of year to be with those we love, so let's make sure to be safe and enjoy it, while keeping in mind the needs of those less fortunate among us.

Mr. Speaker, happy holidays to you, my colleagues and all the people in the province of Ontario.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: I would ask that members help me to welcome three very special guests in the west gallery: Mr. Ron Wallace, the publisher and editor of the *Aurora*, otherwise known as Mr. Aurora; Ms. Barbara Thompson; and Mr. Greg Foster. Welcome.

VISITORS

Hon. David Caplan: Our page Dave Lewis, from Don Valley East, has his family here in the gallery: Jamie, Jane, Kristen and Tim. I'd like to welcome them here today, joining us watching David in action.

VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: On much the same point of order, I'd like to introduce Brianne Westland from Mississauga-Streetsville, who is job-shadowing me today. She's a student at Cawthra Park Secondary School in Mississauga. I welcome her to the Legislature.

VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to introduce to the House Mr. John Bowker. He's with the Roncesvalles Village Business Improvement Association, owner of She Said Boom! and a defender of the rights of small business.

VISITORS

Mr. Mike Colle: In the gallery today we have one of the finest mayors of one of the finest cities in the world with us: the mayor of Mississauga, the honourable Hazel McCallion.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park, Your Worship.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I stand to welcome Sharon Howarth, Adriana Mugnatto-Hamu, Rita Bijon, Mike Nickerson, and a number of other friends and supporters of Donna Dillman, today on the 68th day of her hunger strike, which I understand will be ending as an inquiry has been called by major environmental groups in this country on the issue of uranium mining in Frontenac county. Welcome and have a good holiday.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think my statement may very well be a little timely, with the points of order.

Yesterday, members of the House spent in excess of five minutes introducing guests in the galleries. It seems to me that the business of introductions may be getting a little bit out of control. I would ask that members use their collective intellect to ponder alternatives to these kinds of introductions, and discuss them with me during the adjournment so that we might address it in the spring session.

As an example, it may be appropriate for the Speaker, on behalf of all members of the House, to make introductions at the onset, as I'm about to do on behalf of one member who brought this suggestion forward to me today, in welcoming 53 students and three teachers from a high school located in the riding of Leeds-Grenville. The grades 10 and 11 civics classes from Thousand Islands Secondary School are in the gallery today with their teachers James Cross, Conrad Walpot and Patty Gollogly. Welcome.

VISITORS

Mr. Charles Sousa: I would like us also, if we may, to congratulate and welcome the students of Neil C. Matheson Public School, who are here today. And with Her Worship Hazel McCallion, I think it's appropriate that the students are here, and I would like to congratulate them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome. Again, as has been said in the past in this chamber, to anybody that hasn't been recognized, welcome to Queen's Park today. It's a pleasure to have you here.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday, the member for Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, raised a point of order arising out of question period. The member for Oshawa expressed an opinion that on at least two occasions during yesterday's question period, answers were given that amounted to announcements which should more properly have been made during ministerial statements. The member asked for some clarification on the rules and practice respecting this issue.

While the Speaker is not in a position to make judgment on answers in order to ascertain whether the contents constitute announcements of new public policy, I am nevertheless in agreement with the member that any such announcements should be made during ministerial statements and not question period. I would therefore remind the House that as much as possible, ministers should refrain from using question period to make statements that might more appropriately be made during a ministerial statement, particularly in response to questions asked by the members sitting on government benches. I thank the member from Oshawa for bringing this forward.

1350

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The comments you just made give rise to this. I do put to you, sir, that you do have, as do members, direction from standing orders 36(a) and (d), which are relevant to the comments you just made.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member for that, and I wasn't pointing out any one member. There were a couple of specifics raised, and it's really done just as a reminder to all members. I thank the member for the reminder from the standing orders as well.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FINANCE STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2007LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT DIVERSES LOIS
DE NATURE FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Assessment Act, Community Small Business Investment Funds Act, Corporations Tax Act, Education Act, Income Tax Act, Land Transfer Tax Act and Taxation Act, 2007 / *Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière, la Loi sur les fonds communautaires de placement dans les petites entreprises, la Loi sur l'imposition des sociétés, la Loi sur l'éducation, la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu, la Loi sur les droits de cession immobilière et la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance for a short statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In ministers' statements, Mr. Speaker.

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 SUR LE JOUR
DU PAPE JEAN-PAUL II

Mr. Klees moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day / *Projet de loi 25, Loi proclamant le Jour du Pape Jean-Paul II.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement, please.

Mr. Frank Klees: Members will recognize this bill; this is really a reintroduction of a bill that was before the House in the last session of Parliament. The House was prorogued. We had literally thousands of petitions in support of this bill. I'm reintroducing it today and asking that we give serious consideration to recognizing the life, the work and the contribution of Pope John Paul II as not only a spiritual leader but as a humanitarian and someone who bridged the gap between many cultures and faiths in the time that he reigned as Pope.

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT
(NOT FOR PROFIT
CORPORATIONS), 2007LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES
(PERSONNES MORALES
À BUT NON LUCRATIF)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to limit the approval of corporations to not for profit corporations / *Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin de limiter l'agrément de personnes morales aux personnes morales à but non lucratif.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This act is quite self-explanatory. The purpose of it is to restrict the expansion of child care in this province to the not-for-profit sector, as was advised to this government during the entire process of their consultations with child care providers and the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care particularly, because it's well documented that the not-for-profit sector provides a higher quality of child care at a lower rate. What we really want to see is good-quality child care being the priority of providers and not the shareholders of massive corporations.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SNOW PLOWS), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(CHASSE-NEIGE)

Mr. Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to privately operated snow plows / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux chasse-neige exploités en entreprise privée.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. David Ramsay: This amendment to section 109 is introduced today to clear up a double standard in the Highway Traffic Act that says to a private snowplow operator who has an oversized plow that if they have a contract with the province and a municipality, they're allowed to convey that plow on a provincial highway, but if they happen to have a private contract—say, with a forest company—they cannot and they have to disassemble it and reassemble it at the site where the work is to be taken. This adds a penalty to those operators and to forestry operations.

HOMESTEAD ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007
SUR LES PROPRIÉTÉS FAMILIALES

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to amend the Assessment Act with respect to homesteads / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière à l'égard des propriétés familiales.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: This bill would update the previous Homestead Act to reflect the realities of 2007-08. As members know, assessors will be in the field this winter

and spring and will deliver to taxpayers a triple whammy of assessment increases this fall to be assigned in the 2009 tax year. That means that residents in some homes could see, based on previous results, 60% to 80% assessment increases.

This bill would ensure that the annual increase in assessment during the phase-in would be a maximum of 5% per year; provide a property tax break to seniors and the disabled; have a deductible for home improvements; and also bring in, as has been successful in Manitoba, a reverse-onus system to put the burden on MPAC and not the homeowner when it comes to proving an assessed value.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT (HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE), 2007

LOI DE 2007 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ
AU TRAVAIL
(HARCÈLEMENT ET VIOLENCE)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to protect workers from harassment and violence in the workplace / Projet de loi 29, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail pour protéger les travailleurs contre le harcèlement et la violence dans le lieu de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

1400

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Members of this chamber will know that the Lori Dupont inquest came up with a number of recommendations. Not surprisingly, one of them was this very action that you see to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to make it possible for workers to refuse an unsafe work environment when that work environment includes harassment, bullying and other kinds of violence in the workplace.

Unfortunately, this bill has been here many times before, but the government has not chosen to move on it. It's not the first time it has been recommended by a coroner's inquest. Women are dying at work and others are dying at work as a result of this bullying and violence. It needs to stop. We need to pass this bill.

PROTECTION OF MINORS IN AMATEUR SPORTS ACT, 2007 LOI DE 2007 SUR LA PROTECTION DES MINEURS PARTICIPANT À DES SPORTS AMATEURS

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to provide protection for minors participating in amateur sports / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à protéger les mineurs qui participent à des sports amateurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: There are tens of thousands of volunteers doing a fantastic job, providing hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours in the province of Ontario, yet we found a small loophole in that in some areas there is still no requirement to ensure that convicted sex offenders be subject to submitting a vulnerable person's police check. What this bill does is ensure that convicted offenders are required to submit a vulnerable person's police check with the association in which they are volunteering to ensure whether they should be working with kids.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Julie Harmgardt in the west public gallery today. Julie was a page from 2003, and her brother Simon is a current page from Oakville. She is here today with her mother and her brother Andrew. She also presented a book to Minister Cansfield that she wrote on Killbear Provincial Park. Welcome.

As well, I would like to remind the members in the gallery that they are welcome to be here with us today, but to refrain from clapping, and welcome His Worship David Miller from the city of Toronto to Queen's Park today.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion regarding committees.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that the following committees be authorized to meet during the winter adjournment in accordance with the scheduled meeting dates agreed to by the whips of the recognized parties and tabled with the Clerk of the assembly:

Standing committee on finance and economic affairs;

Standing committee on public accounts;

Standing committee on social policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I rise today to present the 2007 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review, the next phase in our plan to move Ontario forward.

Our economy is as strong and resilient as Ontarians themselves. In fact, so far this year, the province's economic performance has exceeded expectations.

The fundamentals of our economy are vital and strong. We do, however, face some challenges, including the state of the US economy, the value of our dollar and the price of oil. These external forces are having an immediate impact on the manufacturing, forestry, agriculture and tourism sectors—and, most importantly, the families that depend on them. This is our immediate priority, and today I will announce immediate action that builds on our previous initiatives.

The government's plan, at its core, is about investing in our people and in our infrastructure so that, working together, we can foster the next generation of economic growth.

Le plan du gouvernement vise avant tout à investir dans notre population et dans notre infrastructure. Ensemble, nous pourrions favoriser la prochaine vague de croissance économique.

Ontario's highly diversified economy and highly skilled workforce are key to continued growth in both the short and the medium term. Stronger-than-expected growth this year will be followed by continued growth in each of the next two years, though private sector analysts have revised their expectations downward since the 2007-08 budget. Growth this year has been revised upward to 2%, with growth next year expected to be 1.9%, and 2.5% in 2009.

Underlying these revised projections are greater uncertainty in the US economy as a result of recent developments in the American housing market, the stronger-than-expected performance of the Canadian dollar, and the higher-than-anticipated world price of oil. In spite of these very real external challenges, growth is up, employment is up, unemployment is down, and real wages continue to improve. This year's budget will be balanced.

Le budget de cette année sera équilibré.

If the reserve is not required, we will have a \$750-million surplus, \$400 million more than we projected in the March budget. And we will meet our commitments over the next two fiscal years with no deficits and no tax increases. Our plan is balanced; our plan is prudent; our plan is the right plan for Ontario's future.

Our government is moving forward today with a \$3-billion strategy to boost competitiveness, which targets

immediate investments to those sectors, communities and families not sharing in Ontario's prosperity.

Le gouvernement McGuinty va de l'avant aujourd'hui avec une stratégie dotée de 3 \$ de dollars pour augmenter la compétitivité de la province. Les investissements immédiats de cette stratégie sont ciblés sur les secteurs, les collectivités et les familles qui ne profitent pas de la prospérité de l'Ontario.

The success of our plan to date gives us the flexibility to do more now. Building on past initiatives, we're now moving forward on our five-point plan to make Ontario competitive that we outlined in the recent general election.

Our government is taking unprecedented action.

First, effective January 1, 2008, we propose eliminating the capital tax for the manufacturing and resource sectors, including forestry. Further, we are proposing to cut the capital tax rate for all businesses by 21% retroactive to January 1, 2007. In so doing, we accelerate the plan we established in 2004, which will help foster investment and job growth right across Ontario.

1410

Small businesses create jobs and they are the economic backbone of our communities.

Our government will help small business by proposing to increase the small business deduction threshold to \$500,000 from \$400,000, retroactive to January 1, 2007.

Over four years, thousands of small businesses across the province will benefit from this \$100-million investment in their future; 20% of them are in the manufacturing and forestry sectors.

Finally, we propose an increase in the tax credit rate for the Ontario film and television tax credit from 30% to 35%, and for the Ontario production services tax credit from 18% to 25%, lending further support to this burgeoning sector of our economy, making Ontario the leading jurisdiction in this area.

Altogether, this \$1.1-billion tax package targets those sectors and communities under the most pressure. This package would help protect existing jobs, stimulate investment in new jobs and provide immediate cash flow to those industries most in need of working capital.

We are also proposing to expand our land transfer tax refund to resale homes to help out first-time homebuyers. Effective midnight tonight, newly constructed and resale homes would be eligible for a refund of up to \$2,000.

On infrastructure: The McGuinty government has been pursuing an ambitious plan of infrastructure renewal since taking office in 2003.

To create jobs and boost competitiveness, we will invest an additional \$1.4 billion in critical public infrastructure.

Every community has infrastructure priorities, and we want to get those projects started now. The Ministers of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Transportation, and Municipal Affairs and Housing will be providing details on how our municipal partners will soon be able to access \$900 million in new funding.

The most critical infrastructure investment for the Ontario economy is a new border crossing at Windsor. Stakeholders are unanimous: We need that crossing now.

The Detroit River International Crossing Study team will very soon present its preferred alternative for the new access road, plaza and crossing.

The government of Ontario will fully fund its share of the cost associated with that new access road, subject to the successful completion of all approval processes.

As we make these investments, while respecting trade agreements, we will strive to ensure that Ontarians benefit from this massive public infrastructure renewal.

Many Ontario farmers have faced particular challenges related to the Canadian dollar. The McGuinty government will provide \$150 million in new dollars to strengthen competitiveness and to help cattle, hog and horticultural farmers manage the current market conditions. The Minister of Agriculture will work with the farming community to get this help to our farming families quickly.

Tourism is another key sector in our economy that is being buffeted by external events. Today, we are investing an additional \$30 million to extend our Travel Ontario campaign and support economy-boosting cultural festivals.

As we address today's pressing challenges, we need also to continue and enhance investing in research, innovation and commercialization: the foundations of tomorrow's jobs. The Minister of Research and Innovation will announce details of \$50 million in new investments in these areas, an important step in securing tomorrow's jobs.

When we speak of sectors, we are really speaking about Ontario families. When even one of us is out of work, all of us feel a responsibility. We will expand and improve the nearly \$1-billion Employment Ontario program with \$40 million in new resources. This new investment will focus on a timely, rapid re-employment and training service to deliver immediate career counselling and retraining for people facing layoffs.

This government is taking decisive action to build on the strength of our economy, but we could do even more if we had the help of the federal government. Half of the manufacturing jobs in Canada are in Ontario. It's not just a provincial concern; it ought to be a national imperative.

Corporate income taxes in Ontario are already lower than the rate the federal government plans to reach in 2012. We're doing our part to encourage growth, and now it's time for Ottawa to do more. Let me give them an example of what they can do. They ought to extend the accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers by three years. If they do that, we'll match it with our contribution, the money it takes to implement that initiative.

Let's have a look at employment insurance. Most Ontario workers must work longer hours than workers in other parts of Canada, only to qualify for less employment insurance support. This is wrong. If the EI plan worked fairly, an average unemployed Ontario worker would see an additional \$4,000 in annual benefits.

It's time for the federal government to do its part for our cities and towns by providing municipalities with \$1.9 billion in additional funding for infrastructure and public transit.

I should also note that Ontario will not support a free trade agreement with South Korea unless Ontario businesses have equal access to the South Korean market.

Today, those of us on this side of the House call upon those on the other side of the House to join us in urging the federal government to be a full partner in building a stronger Ontario for a stronger Canada.

The people of this province are counting on us to move Ontario forward. La population ontarienne compte sur nous pour que l'Ontario aille de l'avant. They want us to be prudent fiscal managers and pursue real progress at the same time.

Working together, Ontarians will overcome the challenges before us and win opportunities, not just for a few, but for all. That's what this plan is about, that's what the McGuinty government is all about, and the people of Ontario deserve no less.

1420

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

Mr. Tim Hudak: What a difference from the Ontario we've always known. All members who have lived here, were born here or moved here have always known an Ontario that was the lead province in economic growth, in job creation and in Confederation.

Under Dalton McGuinty, the province of Ontario is dead last in economic growth in previous years and projected to be dead last in economic growth in the year ahead of us. Some 150,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have fled the province under the Dalton McGuinty government, and what do we hear from the McGuinty government? "Oh, it's a small contraction," "It's cyclical," or they accuse communities who are coming to try to find jobs as being crying babies. That's the attitude the Dalton McGuinty government has had towards the manufacturing sector and job creation in the province of Ontario.

Some 30,000 individuals have packed up and left the province of Ontario. We've always known in Ontario, whether you came from St. John's, Newfoundland, or Victoria, BC, that you came to Ontario to find your prosperity, start your company or to grow into a job. That's the Ontario we've always known. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, it's the opposite. Some 30,000 talented individuals have fled Ontario to go to other provinces.

I ask you why. In their first days in office, Dalton McGuinty increased taxes, despite contrary promises during the election campaign, on the backs of seniors and working families in the province of Ontario, up to \$900 per individual in the so-called health tax. With the fiscal room they have in this budget and previous budgets, you'd think there would be some break for seniors and

working families in the province of Ontario to give them a break from Dalton McGuinty's high taxes and runaway spending.

Let me tell you, it took from our first Premier, John Sandfield Macdonald, to Ernie Eves in 2002 to get government spending in the province of Ontario to some \$68 billion. Under Dalton McGuinty, government spending has gone up to some \$93 billion according to these economic statements, some \$2 billion more than they said they were going to spend in their recent budget. Despite nothing happening in the summer, despite an election campaign, somehow, some way, they figured out a way to throw \$2 billion more out the door without any results for the taxpayers in the province. You would think that in a \$25-billion runaway spending increase, you would think in some one-third increase in total spending in the province of Ontario, you would find some room to give a break to working families and seniors who have trouble making ends meet in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario—the higher taxes, higher hydro rates, runaway spending and higher user fees.

As our leader, John Tory, and our leader in the House, Bob Runciman, have put forward, a real economic plan would reduce taxes in the province of Ontario. We'd have a real people agenda to make sure that those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order on the government side, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —are properly retrained to get back into the workforce. You would make sure that the level of red tape—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. I'd just like to say to the government side, that there was minimal heckling when the Minister of Finance delivered his speech; I would just ask that that same respect that was given be given from the government side to allow the honourable member to complete his response. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No mention whatsoever of the crying need to reduce red tape and the burden of regulations that are holding back entrepreneurs and small businesses in the province of Ontario; not one word in this economic statement when we see the butcher here in Toronto, the small business down in Grimsby and the burgeoning entrepreneur in North Bay trying to make ends meet and falling under a crushing blow of red tape. There's not one mention of the need to reduce red tape and regulation in the economic statement here today.

No plan whatsoever to increase our energy supply, which has always been a hallmark; one of the strengths of the province of Ontario was our abundant and affordable energy supply. We've seen it go up significantly in the province of Ontario, and there's no mention here whatsoever of any plan to increase our energy supply.

Don't forget, the week before this economic statement came forward, we saw an auditor's report that came out that said some \$1 billion in sales tax arrears had not been collected by the Dalton McGuinty government, an

increase of some 65%. So you increase taxes on seniors and working families and leave a billion dollars on the table uncollected. Shame on you; shame on all of you.

We also saw in that same auditor's statement, once again, criticism of the government for its reckless end-of-year spending: some \$1.4 billion for, I think, the third year in a row. We all know what that end-of-year spending got us: a \$1-million grant to the world's most famous cricket club as part of a \$32-million slush fund, where you got your hands finally caught in the cookie jar.

The Ontario PCs will continue to fight for working families and seniors, real tax cuts, and a reduction in red tape to make sure that Ontario gets back to being the lead province in Canada, its historic position, leading in economic growth.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think people across Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. Again, that same respect that I asked for the official opposition, I would ask that it be granted to the third party as well. Again, there was minimal heckling during the Minister of Finance's delivery.

The leader of the third party.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think people across Ontario wanted to see a response from the McGuinty government today to the loss of closing in on 200,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. But if you read through this so-called economic statement—and it's pretty light for an economic statement—there is very little, virtually nothing, dealing with manufacturing jobs.

Yes, the minister wants to make some reannouncements of things that have been announced and re-announced and re-announced by the McGuinty government before, things that are old news, things that after they've been announced and reannounced, we continue to see manufacturing job losses. The minister wants to talk about tourism, he wants to talk about community festivals, but there is very little, virtually nothing here, to address the loss of manufacturing jobs.

About the only thing which speaks to the issue is that the government now says they want to put about \$40 million into worker retraining. Just to draw a comparison, the province of Quebec announced just a while ago three times what the McGuinty government is announcing for worker retraining, and their job loss in the manufacturing sector has been far less.

To put this into perspective, if you look at job loss in the auto sector, the auto parts sector, the forest sector, the steel sector and in manufacturing generally, it comes out to \$7 billion in lost wages and benefits. What's the McGuinty government's response to that \$7-billion loss? Forty million dollars for worker retraining. Seven billion lost in wages and benefits of workers who do not have a job, and the response of the McGuinty government? A measly \$40 million for worker retraining.

This is not a response to the loss of one in seven manufacturing jobs in Ontario. There is no strategy here to sustain and reposition manufacturing jobs in Ontario. This is a McGuinty government that basically has folded up the tent and wants to talk about tourism and community festivals when the real issue is the loss of good-paying manufacturing jobs.

I think people across Ontario are going to be disappointed again today by a McGuinty government that looks for photo ops, that looks for meaningless repetition of old announcements that haven't been effective, while literally thousands of hard-working people are losing their jobs virtually every week in this province.

1430

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

Mr. Michael Prue: I of course have had an opportunity to read the minister's speech. I am constantly fascinated by how he is able to announce and reannounce and reannounce again the same old chestnuts, the same old policies.

I look down at what he announced today. He has an infrastructure renewal of \$1.4 billion. Pardon me, but I've heard that old chestnut before. I've heard the promises before. I've seen the fact that there's been no action before. My real question to him is, how many times does he have to say this before he actually does something?

I look down at \$900 million for municipalities. He's promised this before; he has not delivered on anything before. How many times does he have to make these announcements, haul the mayors down from all over the place to listen to the same announcement, time after time after time until he actually chooses to do something?

He's talking about the border at Windsor. I think I heard 100 times in this Legislature in the last four years about people needing to do something about the border at Windsor, and today he only promises that they're going to take some future action. Nothing at all, again.

He's talking about research and innovation—same announcement; no details to date. He's talking about the old chestnut of the federal government—if only they would reduce corporate taxes, if only they'd change the unemployment insurance, if only they'd give money to cities. The fact is that it is his responsibility to do the right thing, and he has chosen just to blame someone else.

Last but not least, I cannot believe the thing about Korea. It has nothing to do whatsoever with this Legislature. It has everything to do with the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for responses is complete.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. Trevor Pettit, member from Hamilton Mountain in

the 36th Parliament, in the east public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd also like to take this opportunity to ask all members to join me in thanking this wonderful group of pages. Unfortunately for them, it was a short session, but I trust it was an excellent learning experience for them. We very much appreciated your presence here, and we wish you and your families all the best. But most importantly, hopefully you've learned something, a little more about politics, and that one day you will pursue this noble calling. Thank you to all the pages.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question for the Premier. One of your first bills in the Legislature was the biggest tax hike in the history of Ontario. You hiked taxes on the backs of working families, you hiked taxes on the backs of seniors, you hiked taxes on the backs of businesses, to the point where Ontario has the most uncompetitive business tax rate in all of Canada. Today you are giving part of that back but not making up for the massive tax increases you imposed, and as a result some 150,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have fled the province of Ontario.

Premier, obviously you are admitting today you made an error in increasing business taxes, causing the flight of those jobs. Are you going to apologize to those 150,000 manufacturing people who are now out of work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question, but this is a bad day for the opposition. We have worked long and hard, starting over four years ago, to, first, begin by tackling a \$5.6-billion deficit which the previous government saddled the people of Ontario with. We then fought an election to ensure that this party could not take \$3 billion out of health care for the people of Ontario. And we now find ourselves, as a result of long, hard, painstaking work, in a position where today in this Legislature we're talking about \$3 billion in additional support for the people of Ontario and their economy. We're proud of the work we've put into this, we're proud of being able to be here today, and we're proud of the work that Ontarians are doing.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly, Premier, today's economic statement is an admission of your failure in judgment as the Premier of the province of Ontario. You, sir, made the call. You made the call to increase the business tax rates in Ontario to among the highest in North America. You increased spending by some \$25 billion, and Lord knows how many spools of red tape you put on the back of small businesses in the province of Ontario. The

result: Some 150,000 families are without work because of your failed economic policies. In fact, just two months ago, you said you opposed business taxes. Premier, is this your apology? Are you saying you're dead wrong, or did Greg Sorbara simply screw up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Keep the clock running. I'd ask the member to withdraw that last comment and not make a direct attack at a sitting member. You should be speaking to that member as a member from his respective riding.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw the term "screw up."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The honourable member opposite says he's in favour of our government doing things to strengthen the economy and lend more support to workers who have lost their jobs. But when we came to the floor with a half-billion-dollar auto sector fund—which, by the way, landed \$7 billion worth of new investment—they opposed that. When we came up with a half-billion-dollar advanced manufacturing investment strategy, they opposed that. When we came forward with \$1 billion in supports for the agrifood sector, they opposed that. When we came to the floor with \$1 billion in support for the forestry sector, they opposed that.

Today we've come forward with \$3 billion in a package of business tax measures and investments in skills training, infrastructure and innovation. They again oppose those initiatives.

If the people of Ontario really want to know who's on their side when it comes to helping out workers who have lost their jobs and helping businesses get back on their feet and into the game to become more productive, they know whose side we're on.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm surprised the Premier would bring up the auto sector today. Premier, as you know, this morning—this very morning—we learned that Chrysler is shutting down its Windsor minivan plant: some 5,000 people given their pink slip two weeks before Christmas, and you dare to bring up the auto sector on the day that 5,000 people got their pink slips down in Windsor? The Premier well knows that for every job that he claims he created in the auto sector, some three more jobs in the auto sector have been lost. Dura Automotive, Dana Corp., International Truck and Engine, Freightliner, Ford, GM and Chrysler all have announced layoffs.

Let's face it: This is becoming a train wreck when it comes to the manufacturing sector, and what does the Premier offer today? His job retraining program works out to some \$230 an individual. That works out to an iPod. Thank you very much. Merry Christmas. Will you at least apologize to those workers for those meagre funds invested—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: You want to talk about support for workers who have lost their jobs? Let's understand what we did in our first mandate. We negotiated the first-ever labour market development agree-

ment with the federal government, which puts a half-billion more dollars in our hands here in the province of Ontario.

What the Minister of Finance has announced today is another \$40 million on top of the almost \$1 billion that is already in place. Just so the honourable member opposite understands, we're providing on average \$12,000 in training opportunities for workers who have lost their jobs. If the member opposite is truly concerned about Ontarians who have lost their jobs, then I ask him to stand up and publicly support our government's demand of the federal government that they ensure that our Ontario workers are not discriminated against and receive \$4,000 more in employment insurance, as they would had they been located in other provinces in this wonderful country.

1440

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. If a train leaves Thunder Bay carrying 100 tonnes of toxic goo at 100 kilometres per hour and arrives in Sault Ste. Marie with only 10 tonnes of toxic goo, can the Premier tell us at what point along the trip the minister should resign?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll give the member full marks for creativity. But I think there's an important issue at stake here, and it has to do with the handling of hazardous waste.

We were the first government to ban the land disposal of untreated hazardous waste in our province. That is presently being implemented. The first phase came into place in August 2007. We're bringing Ontario now to an equal footing with the United States EPA standards. The fact of the matter is that when it comes to inspections as well, we are now nearly doubling inspections—500 this year, up from under 300 three years ago. All of our high-risk facilities have already been inspected this year. By any measure, we have come a long way forward when it comes to ensuring that we are properly managing and handling hazardous waste in Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott: What good is the banning if you don't enforce it? The Auditor General made it clear that this is happening: leaky trucks and trains travelling across the province, oozing toxic goo, threatening the safety of the people of this province. He has made it clear that it's not a data entry problem, it's not a paperwork problem; it's an enforcement problem. This is not an issue you can blame on previous governments. You can't blame it on the weather.

They have no one to blame but themselves for their negligence on this file. How could this government allow this shocking situation to occur? How?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'd like to say that we could have turned it around overnight, but let's understand what happened to the original Ministry of the Environment in that government. They cut the funding by 40% and let go one third of the staff. They now pretend that

they're concerned about enforcement, but when they had the opportunity they gutted the ministry and fired one third of the staff.

We have been able to move forward because we've hired more inspectors. In fact, we've hired, so far, 115 more inspectors. That represents a 50% increase in our inspection capacity. I think that could properly be called progress.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Premier simply doesn't get it. Trains and trucks are travelling with toxic goo across this province and the government does nothing about it.

Here's what the Auditor General said: "Hazardous waste is basically being dumped some place where it shouldn't be dumped and it's not being treated."

McCarter said a day after his annual report was released, "That certainly is a risk to the environment. The environment ministry is ignoring their very own rules."

So, again, for the riddle: If a train leaves Thunder Bay carrying 100 tonnes of toxic goo and arrives in the Soo with just 10 tonnes of toxic goo, at what point on the journey should the minister resign?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think the real riddle here is, given their record, cutting the ministry budget by 40%, firing one third of the staff, that they can stand in their place today with the temerity, the unmitigated gall to put this kind of a question.

I think what Ontarians want from us is to continue to make progress. I can report once more: We've hired 115 more inspectors. That represents a 50% increase.

We are grateful for the recommendations and advice provided by the Auditor General. We will work hand in hand with the Auditor General to ensure that we continue to make progress on our watch, contrary to what happened on the previous government's watch.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Under the McGuinty government, we've seen the loss of 175,000 manufacturing jobs. That works out to about a \$7-billion loss in wages and salaries for Ontario working families. The government's response is a mere \$40-million workplace training announcement. Premier, is this the best your government can do: respond to a \$7-billion wage and salary loss with a \$40-million retraining announcement?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm sure that the leader of the NDP does not want to lose track, although he perhaps has difficulty grabbing hold of this, but we are ahead by 418,000 more jobs. If you take all the jobs we've gained and subtract from that all the jobs that we've lost, we're still ahead by 418,000.

When it comes to the supports we're providing to workers who have lost their jobs—and that's a real and pressing issue from a family perspective; we understand that. That's why one of the first things that we did in our first mandate was to negotiate, for the first time ever, a new labour market development agreement with the

federal government. That gave us an additional half-billion dollars.

The leader of the NDP now knows that what we're talking about today is adding \$40 million more by way of supports to an initial \$1-billion Employment Ontario fund. He knows that, and it would be helpful, I think, were he to admit that.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think what the Premier needs to admit is that much of this money would have been spent by the federal government in their jurisdiction. They've transferred it to Ontario, but in total, there is an inadequate response. Let me put it in a perspective that I think Ontarians would understand: \$7 billion lost in wages and salaries; only \$40 million in a worker retraining effort. That's like trading Sidney Crosby, Chris Pronger and Robert Luongo and getting Wade Belak in return and saying that it's a good deal.

Premier, with 175,000 Ontarians losing their jobs, with a loss of \$7 billion in wages and salaries alone, don't you think we deserve a response of more than \$40 million?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, it's true that we have lost some jobs, but overall, we're up by 418,000 new jobs. Using the leader of the NDP's math, if you take those 418,000 new jobs, we're talking about \$28 billion being added to our economy as a result.

Let me tell you a little something about what we're doing in order to help our workers who've lost their jobs. The average investment per individual—this is not a maximum; in fact there is no maximum when it comes to training and upgrading dollars—is \$12,000. We're providing retraining for, on average, 22 weeks. If retraining is required in another community, costs can be supported depending on financial need.

We understand that there are real and pressing issues for those Ontarians who have lost their jobs. It's very important to those families in particular. That's why we are proud to make this additional \$40-million investment today.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, you should read what some of the economists are saying about your so-called attempt to avoid people seeing how bad the manufacturing job loss is. Economists point out that workers who are losing their jobs in the manufacturing sector suffer wage cuts of 25% or more, implying a loss exceeding \$10,000 annually. That's what's happening out there. You wonder why the poverty rate is skyrocketing in Ontario? It's because good jobs are being lost and your so-called McJobs aren't doing it for working families.

Premier, explain to all those people who've lost their jobs and who are at risk of losing their jobs why there isn't one single thing in this budget that will do something to help reposition and sustain manufacturing jobs in Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the leader of the NDP knows that the new jobs that are being created are

very high-paying jobs—I think 95% over \$19.50 an hour. Those are good-paying jobs. Those are the kinds of new jobs that are being created.

Again, we understand that there are some real challenges. That's why we have come forward today with a \$3-billion package. In part, it serves to supplement the benefits and supports that are there for workers who've lost their jobs.

I'm surprised to hear that the leader of the NDP is not standing up and commending us for the tax initiatives that we've taken today to enhance the competitiveness of our businesses so that they continue to grow, so that they enhance the level of productivity, but most importantly, so that they can hire more people. I would have thought that the leader of the NDP understood that the single most important thing that we can do for an unemployed worker, in addition to providing essential supports, is to create more jobs. That's why we're proud of the fact that overall, we are ahead in this economy with 418,000 new jobs.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, the fact of the matter is that manufacturers aren't hiring new workers; they're laying off workers. Despite your attempts at re-announcements and re-photo ops here today, the situation is getting worse. You boast again in your economic statement about \$1 billion in assistance for the forest sector. Well, this morning, Domtar announced they're shutting down one of the most modern paper machines in Ontario—125 more workers out the door.

How do you consider this a response? You make re-announcements that haven't been effective before, but even as you make those reannouncements, more and more manufacturing workers continue to lose their jobs across Ontario. How is your government's response in any way fair to those workers who are losing their jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP is saying that what we talked about today was a re-announcement. Nothing could be less accurate. We're talking about \$3 billion in a brand new announcement today.

In particular, one of the things that folks in the forestry sector have been telling us is, "You've got to do something about those capital taxes." We've been hearing that for at least a decade in the province of Ontario. As you know, we have put in place now—we had in place a plan to phase out capital taxes, but we've announced today for the Minister of Finance's statement that capital taxes for that particular sector will be gone as of January 1, 2008.

So what we've done is, we've just changed the rules today, in keeping with the request of the forestry sector, in order to ensure that we enhance the competitiveness, to make sure that they can get productivity-enhancing equipment, make those investments, get back on their feet, get back in the game and start hiring back people. For the leader of the NDP to say that there's nothing new here means that he doesn't understand what we've announced.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, I understand all too well. Let's just take the Dryden announcement that was made today. The paper machine that's being shut down is one of the largest, most modern paper machines in Ontario. This is a mill that's had over \$1 billion in new investment in the last 10 years. What's the company doing? They're going to shut it down. They're saying to you that your so-called \$1 billion in forestry assistance doesn't do the job. They're saying to you today that anything you've announced today isn't doing the job.

Premier, these are real people. In Thunder Bay, at least three workers who have been laid off from forest sector mills have committed suicide. Many more are in very deep depression. Do you think they would find anything, anything at all, in your economic statement today that would lead them to believe that there's a better future for them, a better future for manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think that one of the things that is demanded of leadership, particularly in challenging times in challenging sectors, is that you speak to the future with a sense of optimism. I don't hear a word of that coming from the leader of the NDP; not a single word of that.

People out there can despair on their own; our shared responsibility is to give them good reasons to be hopeful. That's why we have finally put ourselves in a position—we got rid of their deficit. We held off their insistence at cutting \$3 billion out of health care. We've come to the floor today with \$3 billion by way of new investments, supporting tax competitiveness, new innovation, new supports for our workers. We can't turn this around overnight, but I have an abiding confidence in the people of Ontario, and in our workers, to come together and see ourselves through this difficult period.

We will do our part here in this Legislature. Hopefully, the leader of the NDP will get on board at some point in time and speak about the bright and promising future that's there for all Ontarians. At the same time, it would be nice that we should stand up to the federal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question, the member from—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, let me tell you what those workers wouldn't find inspiring.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. One, two, three. Correct?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question, the member for Nepean—Carleton.

Mr. Howard Hampton: This is the leadoff question. It's my second supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): With respect—

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Howard's right.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Then we're all wrong.

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I think there have been two questions from the leader of the NDP in this round.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Okay. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, I'll tell you what people don't find inspiring. When there's a job crisis, what people don't find inspiring is that your government comes today with essentially empty reannouncements and then says, "We blame Ottawa."

Let me tell you what I think workers would find inspiring. Those workers who have been laid off in the forest sector, and many who have been laid off in the auto parts sector, might find it inspiring if they knew there was going to be an industrial hydro rate which would allow manufacturers to continue to manufacture here. They might find it inspiring that your government was going to put in place a jobs commissioner to actually take action and put together strategies to help reposition jobs.

Premier, why aren't there any initiatives in your budget aimed at sustaining and repositioning manufacturing jobs while you spend all kinds of time trying to blame somebody else?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaking of old chestnuts, the leader of the NDP is floating this notion once again of a jobs commissioner. I don't understand how increasing the size of our bureaucracy is going to create jobs for individuals in the forestry sector.

I can tell you what we have been able to do to date, whether you're talking about our auto sector investment strategy, whether you're talking about our manufacturing sector investment strategy—and that's \$1.5 billion all told; the agri-food sector, \$1 billion; the forestry sector strategy, \$1 billion. What we've been able to demonstrate, what we've been able to communicate to the workers of Ontario and entrepreneurs alike, is that we are there with them. We are on their side. We understand that there are some things over which we have no control, whether that's the value of the Canadian dollar, the price of oil, the sluggish US economy or the advent of globalization. We don't have control over those things, but here in Ontario we do have control over certain kinds of things, and one is where we choose to invest as a government. That's why we're proud today to come to the table with yet another \$3 billion in supports for the economy and Ontario workers.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Education. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board was forced to turn off literally hundreds of classroom fountains because of your made-in-Toronto bureaucratic regulation on aging school lead piping.

The problem is that most of the schools in Barrhaven are brand new. They were built after 1990 and they are not exposed to lead piping, nor are they exposed to elevated levels of lead in the water. Now Barrhaven schools

are forced to shut down fountains because the school board does not have enough custodians to flush the fountains, even though they really don't need to be flushed at all.

Will the minister commit to me today to relaxing the bureaucratic standards so that water fountains in my constituency will flow?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If what the member opposite is asking is whether we will lower standards and expose kids to risk, the answer is no, we will not do that.

What we will do is provide water for those kids. The Ministry of Education has been providing bottled water. The testing standards have gone up. The fact is that there's a new regime of testing that is in place in terms of lead in the water. So we are following that regime. The school boards are going through that testing and we have been providing bottled water to the students who need it in those schools.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "A new regime" is right. I'm going to read something from the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board chair, who said, "This is a very bureaucratic process and position."

The biggest problem in this, other than that we have brand new schools in Barrhaven that are not exposed to lead, is that the schools and people don't need made-in-Toronto regulations for South Nepean. This blanket approach has parents in Ottawa concerned that there is lead in water where there is not.

Let me read this from the CBC: "Megan McNeill-McKinnell said it made parents wonder what was wrong with the water.... 'So you start to think about what has been happening, how long it has been going on for and how come we didn't get information about it.'" It's misinformation created by her ministry.

Again, the schools in Barrhaven are brand new. They are not exposed to lead or lead piping. Will they relax these Liberal flushing guidelines for lead because there is no lead piping? Will she let the kids in Barrhaven drink the water in their schools?

1500

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite should talk to her environment critic, who is not looking too comfortable at this moment. The fact is, I am the Minister of Education for the whole province of Ontario; I am not the Minister of Education for Toronto. The standards that are in place in Toronto have to be in place in Ottawa, in Kapuskasing, in Timmins and across the whole province. Every child in this province deserves to have safe drinking water, and we're going to ensure that that's the case.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When will this government take seriously the recommendations, the latest of which came from the inquest into the murder of Lori Dupont, that call for legislation to ensure that workers are not subject to harassment and violence in the workplace in this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for her interest in this important issue and begin, I guess, by expressing on behalf of all of us in this Legislature our condolences to the Dupont family and all impacted by this tragedy. I want to also thank the coroner's jury for the good work that they put into this review. We're going to be taking a very, very serious look at the recommendations. We're looking forward to a thorough review of those recommendations, and we'll move forward on that basis.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Today I introduced workplace harassment and violence legislation, and there's an entire movement in this province that is trying to get this new law put in place. It's the women's movement, it's the labour movement, it's ONA and OPSEU and the OFL and CUPE—literally all of the unions who represent workers in these kinds of workplaces—and now the coroner's jury as well. Everyone wants action.

Nurses are being brutalized. Women are being killed. It's reprehensible that the McGuinty government has not acted to prevent these kinds of tragedies in this province. When will the minister actually act, heed our call for workplace harassment and violence protection in Ontario's workplaces?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We received these recommendations just this week and we're going to take a very thorough look at the recommendations. This government does not tolerate violence anywhere, let alone in the workplace, and we will not tolerate it in the future. We think that these recommendations are worth having a good look at. We're going to have a very thorough review of them. Employers across the province should know that under the Occupational Health and Safety Act they have a duty to take every precaution to ensure that the health and safety of their workers are protected, and that duty extends to the issue of violence as well. However, we will definitely review these recommendations and give it a good, thorough study.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, improving access to family care is a cornerstone of medicare, and ensuring retention of physicians is central to its goal. Ontario's family physicians should be adequately compensated to ensure that we are competitive with other jurisdictions. My question is: What has our government done to address the issue of physician compensation and retention?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm pleased today that CIHI has come out with some data that I think people will be interested in looking at. Our government has increased physician compensation quite dramatically every year since coming into office, and today's report shows progress made over the 2004-05 report. The CIHI data shows that Ontario pays doctors more than the national average in every subspecialty area. Put another way, the gross pay of physicians in Ontario has increased

11.4% in the two fiscal years between 2003-04 and 2005-06. That means that our doctors are making an average of \$30,000 more than the national average and that Ontario has risen to third in Canada in average gross billings for physicians—a jump from fifth just the year before.

The resources that we put to work have worked for Ontarians. Some 500,000 more Ontarians are enjoying access to family health care provided at the community level by Ontario's hard-working physicians.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: The report the minister mentions is interesting, and it serves as a very good reminder of this government's success in improving access to family doctors. This government has dramatically increased the number of family health teams in the province, along with alternative models of physician compensation. I would like the minister to explain how the data released today takes into account the investments by this government.

Hon. George Smitherman: The data shows the benefit of the earliest investments from our agreement almost four years ago with Ontario's doctors. It captures about \$400 million worth of investment. In subsequent reporting cycles we'll have the advantage of learning the impact of \$652 million of investment which occurred in 2006 and 2007. And yet to come, starting on January 1, 2008, is a further \$364 million worth of compensation for Ontario's physicians. All taken together, we're making tremendous progress at ensuring that Ontario's physicians are appropriately compensated for the quality of work that they do with Ontario communities. We're really, really excited that here in Ontario we've championed new ways of practising, like the family health team, which brings together doctors, nurses and other practitioners to enhance the comprehensiveness of care and to be able to provide care for even more Ontarians—progress to show in results today and further progress to be shown as further data comes forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to apologize to the leader of the third party. In conference with the table, you were correct, and we were wrong. Our apologies to you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This week, Minister, you appointed yet another supervisor for yet another Ontario hospital. What is of note is that these hospitals are providing care in the high-growth communities, such as Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, Stevenson Memorial in Alliston and William Osler Health Centre in Brampton. I also understand that there is a peer review team looking at the hospital operations at Rouge Valley Health System. Historic underfunding of growth hospitals has resulted in a \$945-million gap in hospital funding for Ontarians living in high-growth communities, such as the community of Burlington. The gap continues to widen, without targeted growth funding. To prevent the appointment of even more supervisors in more high-growth

areas, can the minister please tell us when he will provide Ontario's high-growth hospitals with at least the \$100 million in growth funding that his party promised during the election?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's always a delight when the Conservative Party, the official opposition, stands in the Legislature of Ontario, just a couple of months after campaigning in favour of a \$3-billion cut to health care. It's not enough that they, alongside the New Democrats, stand as the parties in this Legislature that, when they had the privilege of governing and responsibility for health care, in two successive years cut by hundreds of millions of dollars the funding for Ontario's hospitals. Over four years, every Ontario hospital has received more money, and I rather predict, on the basis of the three-year indication that we've provided, that each will see more money in the coming years.

We have instituted growth funding. We've appointed fewer supervisors than the party that came before us, and the people of Burlington have benefited from the wisdom of people across the province who elected a party and defeated another one that promised to cut \$3 billion out of health care.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The \$945-million gap speaks for itself. On behalf of the millions of Ontarians living across the 905/GTA area and other high-growth communities, I'm disappointed that the minister is unable to provide Ontarians with a detailed plan about an election promise.

The funding gap for hospital care, including in Burlington, is getting wider: \$221 million in this year per resident compared to \$217 million last year per resident. High-growth hospitals are currently negotiating their accountability agreements with LHINs, and those will outline the range and volume of services that will be provided. Not having adequate funding for growth will impact local access and mean longer waiting in emergency rooms.

1510

Mr. Minister, where is your plan to address hospital issues in high-growth areas, and why won't you get it rolling by keeping your party's \$100-million election promise? Aren't you even concerned about the impact—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: Rather than being concerned, indeed I'm optimistic, because the people of Ontario have already made sure that one thing doesn't happen, and that is that that honourable member's party would be here working on their detailed plan to implement their campaign platform, which would have seen the closure of hospitals all across the province of Ontario.

If the member wants to see our plan for high-growth areas, take a look from the highway at the construction cranes that are on site at Trillium hospital, or come to the groundbreaking at Oakville, or visit the new hospital in Brampton, or go to Richmond Hill and see the construction crane, or come and visit with us in Markham as

we break ground on a new hospital, or go and visit the new regional cancer centre in Oshawa or even go to the community of Ajax, where recently, alongside our newly elected member, we broke ground on a long-awaited renewal of that hospital.

The people in the high-growth areas can see the money coming as the construction cranes bring new buildings, and they have been saved from the \$3-billion cut proposed by that honourable member's party.

FOOD SAFETY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Yesterday I stood in this chamber and brought forward the case of Karl's Butcher and Grocery shop, in business for 46 years, forced by this government to close because of these draconian measures, forced to put \$200,000 into his business to be able to stay open, despite the fact that Toronto Public Health said he didn't need to do any of it in the first place. Today, I'd just like to ask this minister if she will stand and finally admit that the McGuinty government is actually working on behalf of the big meat-packing businesses, the Wal-Mart-sized businesses and against small neighbourhood business.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm happy to stand in this House and clarify for the member opposite that for this government the health and safety of people in our community who access food products is a priority. In the year 2001, the Food Safety and Quality Act was passed. It was never proclaimed until we came to government. When it was passed, we passed regulations. Along with that, we provided a \$25-million fund so that those facilities that would be impacted by the regulations would have an opportunity to gain support from this government so that they could make their establishment comply with these new health regulations.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Adam Wesierski at Kingsway Meat Products actually applied for that paltry \$25,000 about three months ago and hasn't yet heard back from this government and meanwhile has had to mortgage his house to finance his business. When will you actually address this outrageous situation? When will you stop closing small businesses across Ontario? Finally, when will you admit that you are the true butcher of Main Street?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask that the member withdraw that.

Interjection.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: What I can say to the honourable member is that we certainly do want to do whatever we can to support small food processors in the province of Ontario. That is why we established the \$25-million fund. When this situation came to my attention, I asked officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs to contact this business to ensure that all of the resources that are made available by this government were known to the business and that we could do all that we could to assist them to comply with

the regulations so that this operation could continue to provide safe, quality meat products to people in the community.

My staff continue to be very prepared to support this business. I would also caution the member that there have been numbers presented in this House. These are numbers that are estimates that have been provided. I would say, though, that my ministry would be very happy to work with this business to ensure that the most cost-effective way to meet the regulations is found—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Minister, over the last several months I've heard from many small and medium-sized enterprises about the challenges they face as a distinct segment of our business community. With small and medium-sized enterprises accounting for 99% of business and more than 50% of jobs in Ontario, it is imperative that we work with local business communities to address their concerns and ensure that Ontario remains a great place to do business.

Over the last month, I understand that you have been meeting with small and medium-sized business leaders from different regions across the province, including a visit to my riding of Ottawa Centre, in an effort to understand the unique challenges that businesses face. Can the minister please enlighten the members of this Legislature about those meetings?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: First of all, I want to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for asking this question. I also want to thank him for actually helping me out to organize the discussion sessions in Ottawa. We had about 60 small and medium-sized businesses participate in this discussion in Ottawa, and it was a very worthwhile session.

In addition to Ottawa, we have done these sessions in Mississauga, today we did one in Toronto and my PA did one in Chatham, and the main purpose of these sessions is to get feedback from small and medium-sized businesses so that we can work together to create an environment for small and medium-sized businesses to succeed.

In the supplementary I will highlight how some of those things actually have translated into what the finance minister presented today.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Many of my constituents who participated in the round-table session provided me with feedback that was very positive. They were pleased that they were invited and found that the session was a great means to network and share ideas.

Small and medium-sized business owners contribute so much to our local communities. They unlock their creative potential and contribute to innovation, investment and job creation in every part of the province. Minister, can you please tell us what your ministry has been doing over the past year to support small and medium-sized businesses across Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member again for asking the question. He has very rightfully said that these discussions have been very important and that has shaped the framework on which we work now.

I want to thank the Minister of Finance today for outlining \$1.1 billion in tax reductions over the three years, which include the capital tax elimination for the manufacturers effective January 1, 2008, and a 21% reduction for all capital taxes effective January 1, 2007, for all businesses. These are some of the things that our businesses have been asking for for a long time, and I want to thank the minister for taking that into consideration.

In addition to that, we have been working very hard to actually reduce some of the paperwork for the small businesses, and I'm pleased to report that we have reduced it by 24%. We also have about 46 enterprise centres in Ontario, including nine satellite centres, which really help small businesses to do what they do best, which is to run their businesses.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Earlier this year, your predecessor requested of the Ontario Parks Board, and received, the recommendations to lighten the ecological footprint of logging in Algonquin Park. This report was received by citizens in my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke with shock—nothing less than shock. As you're well aware, the management of Algonquin Park forest has never been better, ensuring sustainability with minimal impact to the other users of the park.

Minister, why would you go down this road without consulting the stakeholders, including First Nations?

1520

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question. As a matter of fact, I did meet with the parks board and I did receive the recommendations, and I asked them to explicitly go back—with the Algonquin Forestry Authority and themselves, to go out and do further consultation, including First Nations. I asked them to do that a couple of weeks ago. So it's well under way. We do need to have a thorough consultation before any final decisions are being made, and we'll ensure that that does occur.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's you asking the Ontario Parks Board. What about you, Minister? Are you aware that there are thousands of direct and indirect jobs dependent on the proper management and harvest of timber in Algonquin Park? In fact, the harvest of Algonquin Park improves the health of the silviculture of that park.

What assurances can you give the people today that you will not proceed with any changes to the harvest program in Algonquin Park without you having full consultations and discussions with all stakeholders concerned, including First Nations? You, Minister, not the parks board.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I said that the parks board and the Algonquin Forestry Authority would be doing joint consultations on my behalf. I spoke with some members from the member's area who in fact are involved in the logging, and they were delighted with this particular response because they felt that that kind of consultation had to take place. So in fact, it is going to happen. It will be fulsome, and nothing will be done until I'm satisfied that full consultation has taken place, including First Nations.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Like many suppliers of health care equipment supplies to people on workers' compensation, a small business in my riding got a letter on October 30 that said, basically, "We are writing to inform you that effective March 3, 2008, the" workers' compensation "will require all approved purchases of health care equipment and supplies to be made from one of our three ... suppliers"—the big-box stores. Can the minister tell me why he is opposed to small business getting a part of the business of the workers' compensation?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is an issue that I was just made aware of, actually just within the last 24 hours, by the member from Niagara Falls, and I thank him for bringing it to my attention. I thank you for bringing it forward to me today, but I have nothing further. I'm going to have to take a look at this, and certainly I'll report back to you with any details I receive.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, it's very convenient that we are here today in this House in order to raise this issue. You know darned well what the issues are. You're the minister responsible for compensation. The issue here is a very simple one. You're saying that only the big-box stores are going to be able to supply medical supplies and aids to people who are on workers' compensation, pushing out the small business people.

My question is a really simple one: Are you prepared today in this House to stand up and say that you're going to stop this practice and ensure that small businesses across Ontario are going to be able to supply those services that they've long supplied to the injured workers of this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for bringing this to my attention, and the member for Niagara Falls as well for bringing this to my attention. It is a priority for us to make sure that every cent that is spent within that system goes to the workers, so we want to make sure that the workers are being looked after in everything that's being done in this area.

I thank the member for the question. I'll certainly look into it further. At the same time, our priority remains to be with the workers, and it will continue to be thus.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. As a lifelong resident of

Mississauga South, I can attest, having seen first-hand, to the economic growth and prosperity that innovation can bring to the local and provincial economy. In my role as director of business development at RBC Financial Group, commercial markets, I have gained an understanding of the challenges that entrepreneurs face in gathering seed money, which is critical to grow their young and innovative companies into Ontario's industry leaders of tomorrow, into the next generation of innovative jobs and businesses that will provide high-paying jobs for Ontario families.

Minister, can you please outline steps your ministry has taken to foster the growth of young and innovative firms here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question and congratulate him on his election to this place.

The McGuinty government continues to strengthen Ontario's ability to support our innovative, high-growth companies. The government has partnered with some of our largest pools of institutional capital—OMERS, RBC, the Business Development Bank of Canada and Manulife Financial—to create an Ontario-focused, market-driven \$165-million fund of funds, the new Ontario venture capital fund. I want to thank our partners for joining my ministry in this initiative.

This innovative initiative is part of the McGuinty government's Ideas to Market strategy, a \$160-million investment being made over four years by my ministry. The Ideas to Market strategy uses these programs to encourage early investment and management expertise for promising born-in-Ontario innovative enterprises. It will help them attract further investment, succeed with their innovations, stay in the province and, most importantly, create good-paying jobs for Ontario families.

Mr. Charles Sousa: It is when an innovative firm is in its start-up stage that it most needs capital to survive and grow. Ontario generates a number of start-up companies, but few companies grow to the point where they can secure venture capital financing. As a result, these same companies often relocate to other jurisdictions where they can get the capital and investment support they need. How is the Ministry of Research and Innovation creating a climate in Ontario that attracts talented fund managers and large investors and ensures that our province's emerging companies can find the capital they need to grow in Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: The Ontario venture capital fund is designed to address the challenges of innovative start-up firms, creating a climate that attracts talented fund managers and large investors.

You know, 20th-century governments kick-started the venture capital market through tax credits to individual investors. But unlike my critic in the NDP, the member for Beaches–East York, I don't spend my time watching reruns of *Back to the Future*; I focus my efforts on the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. Rather than take advice from the NDP, our government has listened to the advice of business leaders such as Richard

Rémillard, executive director of Canada's Venture Capital and Private Equity Association: "We have always believed that it is vital that we build a strong venture capital market in Ontario if we want to build world-class, high-growth companies here, and it is very encouraging to see that the government of Ontario recognizes this reality. We have supported this program since it was first announced."

In the 21st century, the McGuinty government understands the need to ensure that large pools of institutional capital are available right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'll direct my question to the Minister of Natural Resources because of the example I intend to use, although I'm sure it will apply to other ministries.

Minister, herein lies the problem: As I'm sure you're well aware, this is a very important time for the Outdoors Card renewal, and there are potentially tens of millions of dollars coming in. Most recently, I renewed my Outdoors Card at \$136.77, and was happy to do so. The problem lies in the fact that the card is not valid until January 1, at which time the GST drops by 1%. The difficulty is, when you purchase your card prior to that, there's an expectation that you're paying the additional 1%. What is your ministry doing or how are you accounting for that 1% problem?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I thank the member for the question because it is of concern to us. As of December 12, the implementation of the 1% reduction of the GST has not been approved by the government of Canada or by the Canada Revenue Agency, so it's been very problematic for us as we're trying to get the Outdoors Cards done, the fishing licences out right away. Obviously, it is a challenge for us.

We are working to implement that reduction by January 1, 2008, but for those that are already printed, we've put it in and it will stay, especially within the fishing licences, for example. Where we can rebate, we will rebate without question, but we're just at an impasse because it has not been approved yet by the government of Canada.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: One of the difficulties is that the licence issuers have been calling and asking how to handle this situation. They have no information. They're not receiving calls back to get direction on how to handle this specific issue. I'm assured it applies to ministries such as transportation or other ministries issuing licence fees as well. Can you send or will you be sending out direction to those licence issuers who sell millions of dollars on behalf of your ministry so they can understand how to handle the process?

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: Absolutely. One of the biggest changes, of course, has been the communications strategy, because you keep waiting for this, thinking it's going to be passed. We will do our absolute utmost. We

were trying to get the regs out early in order to facilitate folks and then we stumbled around, trying to wait for this GST approval as well.

So you're right. We will do this. We will make sure that we get the information out and communicate this challenge that we've been dealing with, and how we're going to resolve it as well.

1530

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. My private member's Bill 6 has been referred to the standing committee on general government. I can't emphasize enough the importance of this piece of legislation to the people of my community and Ontario. If that piece of legislation had been in place when many plants closed in my area, those workers would have had protection in all monies owed to them.

When will your government take the initiatives necessary to create and support new job initiatives for Hamilton and the surrounding area so that these unemployed workers have an opportunity to seek equally valued employment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for bringing his private member's bill forward.

In a question to the Premier—I guess it was late last week—the Premier indicated that he would be discussing the matter with me. The Premier has, in fact, done that and indicated that he would like us to take a close look at the member's bill and see if, in fact, there is something there that we can do to assist workers who have lost their jobs.

As the member knows, the federal government recently introduced a bill aimed at protecting employee wages. We're taking a close look at what the federal government is doing and the status of that legislation. We do, in fact, support that federal bill. We want to see if there are ways that we can work in concert with the federal legislation to do all that we can to assist workers who have indeed lost their jobs.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm glad to hear that the minister is looking into it, and the Premier. I appreciate that initiative. However, I've heard other ministers mention some initiatives by their departments, in reference to talking to local mayors and other community leaders. This has happened before in previous governments and in my community.

The time for talking is over. The time for new committees to investigate strategies is over. Now is the time—not tomorrow, not next week, not next year, but now. When will we get some concrete plans from the ministry about real initiatives that can begin now for my hard-hit community?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I appreciate the member's impatience, but he just put his bill in on Thursday and we're having a look at it now. It is going to take some time to

both review his bill and to take a look at the direction the federal government's going with their legislation.

It's very important in these matters that governments are in sync when they're responding to the needs of workers who are struggling. We're going to make sure, as we move forward, and judging by the excellent statement that we saw today from our Minister of Finance, that this is a matter that's of great importance to this government. We recognize the importance to the people of Ontario of ensuring that our workers are treated fairly. We will do our best to take a look at what the federal government is doing and to work in concert with them.

ABOLITION OF BRITISH SLAVE TRADE

Mr. Kim Craitor: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I was pleased to learn today that the minister attended a function at St. Lawrence Hall to close the McGuinty government's year-long commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. This important piece of legislation had an impact which was felt over the world, including my riding of Niagara Falls. I'd like to take a moment to recognize a leader in our community in black history, Wilma Morrison.

My question to the minister is, what other steps has the government taken to commemorate the passage of this very significant act?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for asking such an important question.

The 1807 act to abolish the slave trade outlawed the practice of slavery throughout the British Empire, including here in Ontario. Ontario's participation in the commemoration of this event was part of a larger movement around the world. Throughout 2007, various Commonwealth states have implemented activities designed to raise awareness about the history of the slave trade and its legacies.

In Ontario, the Honourable Dr. Jean Augustine was appointed chair of the Ontario Bicentenary Commemorative Committee.

On March 21, 2007, the McGuinty government introduced an all-party resolution to declare March 25 as the International Day for the Commemoration of the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: Today I have a petition from the Ontario Health Coalition with 18,387 signatures. This petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario reads as follows:

"Whereas the Uxbridge hospital is struggling to keep its emergency room open past the October provincial election; and

"Whereas the community of Uxbridge fears losing its emergency and other health services at its local hospital as health services are rationalized and restructured across the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To ensure that the provincial government creates a comprehensive and clear plan to make sure that small hospitals remain vibrant providers of a range of services, including fully staffed emergency rooms; and

"To ensure that no other smaller or rural community faces the loss of local emergency services or any other services under this or any other provincial restructuring of health services."

I agree with this petition and affix my name to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Petitions?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm proud to rise today as the representative for the riding of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington to speak out for the people of my riding as their Progressive Conservative member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We were asking for petitions at this point; then we'll move to orders of the day.

The member for Willowdale.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. David Zimmer: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas attention to white collar or corporate crimes in Ontario, particularly within the unregulated time-share and time-share-like industries such as holiday, travel and vacation clubs, have not been given the priority they deserve by our government, thus causing grave financial, mental and emotional ruin to many unknowing customers and their families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To regulate more stringently, through stronger and more appropriate legislation, time-share and time-share-like industries in Canada....;

"To appoint a committee or investigative body that will look into and address the weaknesses and loopholes of the current Consumer Protection Act, 2002....;

"To take immediate proactive steps by launching a full-scale investigation into the modus operandi of these time-share conglomerates....; and

"To consider" various other "industry ... regulations...."

I agree with this petition and I'm pleased to affix my signature. I deliver it to page Diem.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to present a group of petitions calling for the creation of Pope John Paul II Day. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights;

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions;

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities; and

"Whereas Bill 194, the Pope John Paul II Day Act, 2007"—a new act has been introduced today—"did not pass before the Legislature was adjourned....;

1540

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario designate a day as Pope John Paul II Day in honour of his extraordinary contribution to our communities."

In support, I affix my signature.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a reported epidemic of fraudulent loans involving notarized affidavits by/from loan-handling lawyers' affiants that claim debts will be carried by other people's credit worthiness and/or equity in property; and

"Whereas banks, financial institutions and lending houses claim innocence in that they rely on third parties to perform potential debtors' identity validation and financial due diligence in cases of loans and mortgages they approve on the basis of third-party representations; and

"Whereas it is perfectly legal for banks to readily approve loans they consider financially risk-free using third-party affidavits that make debtors of people who are completely unaware, uninvolved and never see the money; and

"Whereas, by way of example, people have signed their support to reopen a quashed OSC investigation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That an investigation concerning identity theft be conducted into banks', financial institutions' and lending houses' lending policies, practices and procedures (as per reopening OSC file no. 20050316-17043) to identify weaknesses in the law and lending-system procedures for appropriate amendments to the law to strengthen specific areas of responsibility for potential debtors' identity validation and financial due diligence that will safeguard people's wealth and equity in property from fraudulent loan applications, specifically in cases of third party representations using notarized affidavits by/for loan-

handling lawyers that may benefit themselves and/or their affiants.”

It is signed by hundreds of people, including the top signature, “Jack Layton, House of Commons.” I am in agreement and will sign my signature thereto.

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, even though job creation in Ontario is far outpacing job loss, one lost job is one too many; and

“Whereas last year the average unemployed worker in Ontario received \$5,110 in regular employment insurance benefits while the average unemployed person in the rest of Canada received \$9,070; and

“Whereas, on average, the federal government provides an unemployed worker in Ontario with \$684 less for job training than it provides for an unemployed worker in another province; and

“Whereas fair funding could mean additional investments in important areas such as enhanced apprenticeship programs, labour market integration for new immigrants, and skills training for older workers; and

“Whereas Ontario workers deserve the same opportunities as other Canadians to improve their skills, find meaningful work, contribute to Canada’s prosperity and support their families;

“We, the undersigned, therefore petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to be fair to Ontario workers by providing equal funding for employment insurance benefits and job training compared to other provinces.”

I’ll affix my name to this petition.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Toby Barrett: These petitions are entitled “Delhi Wants Its MTO Office Back.” Many of us went door-to-door in Delhi, but there are also signatures from Simcoe, Lynedoch, La Salette, Courtland, Otterville, St. Williams and Port Rowan.

“To the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas the community of Delhi has historically had a driver’s licence issuing office; and

“Whereas the current government sent out a request for proposal for a new operator of a driver’s licence issuing office in Delhi; and

“Whereas many individuals in the town of Delhi responded to the RFP and paid \$68 in application fees to the Ontario government; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government, after collecting this money from Delhi citizens, has decided against reopening an issuing office in Delhi; and

“Whereas the residents of Delhi are currently being forced to drive 20 kilometres to the nearest issuing office;

We, the unsigned, demand the McGuinty government to revisit the proposals already received and reopen an

office to meet the needs of residents within the community.”

I affix my signature to these ones.

IDENTITY THEFT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads:

“Whereas there is a reported epidemic of fraudulent loans involving notarized affidavits by/from loan-handling lawyers’ affiants that claim debts will be carried by other people’s credit worthiness and/or equity in property; and

“Whereas banks, financial institutions and lending houses claim innocence in that they rely on third parties to perform potential debtors’ identity validation and financial due diligence in cases of loans and mortgages they approve on the basis of third party representations; and

“Whereas it is perfectly legal for banks to readily approve loans they consider financially risk-free using third party affidavits that make debtors of people who are completely unaware, uninvolved and never see the money; and

“Whereas, by way of example, people have signed their support to reopen a quashed OSC investigation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That an investigation concerning identity theft be conducted into banks’, financial institutions’ and lending houses’ lending policies, practices and procedures (as per reopening OSC file number 20050316-17043) to identify weaknesses in the law and lending system procedures for appropriate amendments to the law to strengthen specific areas of responsibility for potential debtors’ identity validation and financial due diligence that will safeguard people’s wealth and equity in property from fraudulent loan applications, specifically in cases of third party representations using notarized affidavits by/for loan-handling lawyers that may benefit themselves and/or their affiants.”

I agree with this petition. I have signed it and send it to the table by way of page Simon.

FEDERAL ELECTORAL REPRESENTATION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with the number of seats in the federal Legislature. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the government of Canada has proposed legislation to increase the number of seats in the federal Parliament, resulting from recent data reflecting population growth; and....

“Whereas this legislation discriminates against Ontario electors by making their vote count for less in the House of Commons in comparison to electors from other parts of the country such as British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec; and

"Whereas this discrimination against Ontario" on the part of the Stephen Harper government "is nothing new; and

"Whereas we have seen" the government of Canada "take a dismissive attitude toward our cities by failing to heed the call of Canada's mayors for 1% of the GST for municipalities; and

"Whereas the Stephen Harper government has demonstrated an apathetic attitude for the challenges [that] the sluggish US economy and a strong Canadian dollar are placing on our manufacturing sector by failing to come up with a plan to aid the McGuinty government's efforts in this regard; and

"Whereas this injustice hits at the very heart of democracy by creating a House of Commons where every single Canadian vote doesn't carry the same weight;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we congratulate the Premier for undertaking this initiative."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and since I agree—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further petitions? The member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your new position in the chair.

"Highway 35 Four-Laning.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

It's signed by many people from my riding, and I attach my signature to it and will hand it to page Diem.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm enjoying the support of the member for Eglinton-Lawrence on this petition. It's addressed to the Speaker, the government of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2007

LOI DE 2007 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 12, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

Mr. Jim Brownell: On a point of order: I'd like to take a moment this afternoon and introduce John and Margaret St. Marseille from my riding. They're here in the members' gallery. Annie has been a page here—a great experience—and I just want to thank them for coming down and supporting their daughter here at the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): While it's not a point of order, welcome to Queen's Park.

Debate? The honourable member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm proud to rise today as a representative for the riding of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, to stand up and to speak out for the people of my riding as their Progressive Conservative member. Isn't it fitting that a brand new riding has the opportunity to bring a brand new message to Toronto and Queen's Park, a brand new message delivered with conviction, spoken with passion and that resonates with resolve and respect?

The people of Ontario and my riding are blessed with an exceptional ancestry and rich history. Our forefathers came here long ago into a vast land of wilderness and hardships, with little more than their dreams and ambitions on their backs and in their minds. However, they would not recognize Ontario today with all our modern technology, our highways, hospitals, high-rises, industry, and schools, and with so many conveniences. But all of what we have today is built on the foundations that our ancestors laid.

Many of our ancestors came from the Old World, where property ownership, individual freedoms and

political representation was unknown. These rights and freedoms were the exclusive domain and privilege of the aristocracy, but with their new freedoms and their labours, they built a new world and a new country. They created prosperity with freedom.

However, if our ancestors could see Ontario today, they would see that many of the rights, freedoms and justice that they cherished are being eroded, and we must help to rebuild them. They would see the Old World aristocracy they fled migrating into a New World bureaucracy. The people in my riding and myself know that when legislation removes the individual's responsibility, we create an irresponsible society, and if we remove the rights and freedoms of others, we will lose our own rights tomorrow. We also know that respect for the law is complete only when laws respect people.

The Premier's response to my questions last week illustrate the growing difference between urban and rural Ontario, a difference filled with a cradle full of nanny-state legislation. Last week, I was referred to as an anti-government champion. Whether I'm a champion or not, I do not know, but I am a strong advocate for good government.

The Premier also stated that he has significantly different views than I. Well, I'm sure that's clear to everyone here. I would say that we are at least a country mile apart on our views about Ontario. The Premier illustrated the difference, saying that he can't take care of his lands—he needs government to do this; that he can't educate or care for his children—he needs government to do that as well; and that he can't build the economy—he needs government. "Can't" is the word that characterizes the Liberal government, and what I am not.

In rural Ontario, we can: We can take care of our lands and our waters, we can take care of our children and our families, and we can build our economy, if the government stops telling us we can't. In rural Ontario, we know that governments are created to prevent injustice, not to create injustice; that government is here to represent the people, not to fund special interest groups; that government is here to protect people and their property from others, not from themselves; and that rewards are found by taking risks. Eliminate risk, and rewards are lost. Our true heritage and our unique culture must flourish throughout Ontario, both urban and rural—people who can, not people who can't.

I learned a lesson a long time ago: If you tolerate injustice, you will accept tyranny; if you tolerate falsehoods, you will breed liars; if you tolerate a little bit of stealing, you will encourage cheaters; if you tolerate excuses, you create dishonesty. The lesson in life is clear: In life, you get what you tolerate.

I prefer honesty over tolerance. Political correctness is often the cause of this tolerance. We have become fearful to speak truthfully for fear of offending someone, somewhere, some time. However, it's better to be truthful than to make excuses.

As I look back on the flowery words and the beautiful phrases of the throne speech, the government claims to

have a plan for today's economy. It claims to have a plan for jobs, the best jobs, to build the strongest economy, to work with businesses and labour to attract, retain, and create good, high-paying jobs. Then I look at the reality: the tobacco farmers going bankrupt by government policy, the butcher shops being forced to close, the mills in the forests full of layoffs and silence. I see a never-ending attack of expensive overregulation that is destroying our small businesses. Our contractors cannot hire our youth because of rigid apprenticeship ratios, and the cost of doing business in Ontario is so high, people are leaving or simply closing their doors.

In my view, our rural economy and industries such as Hershey's, Nestlé and Domtar must stay in Ontario, not leave for Mexico or China, and they cannot be placed on Ontario's endangered species list. In my view, we must remove the red tape, the regulations and the incompetence so that our farmers' markets, our tourist resorts, our sawmills and our butchers can flourish, not flounder—and where our children can expect more than a minimum wage.

A throne speech full of hollow words ought to be expected after four years of broken promises. I know that legislation for the public good grows government and that legislation that protects individual freedoms trims the bureaucracy, that legislation requires objectives in order to measure accountability, that people who bear the consequence of legislation must be the decision-makers and also own the expense. Finally, I understand that there is an exception to every rule, and that legislation is needed for those rare circumstances, not the common occurrence.

1600

For two weeks now, I have witnessed the workings of our provincial Parliament. I see representatives who have put forth significant time and effort to be elected and who have an unquenchable thirst and desire and vivid dreams to make changes and improve our province. However, I also see theatrics. I hear the scripted lines of the actors and the actresses, the cameo roles of the stars. I see the makeup artists, the stage hands and the special effects people. They are all here to create a wonderful illusion and fine entertainment.

I'm here to advocate for the people of Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, to provide them value and to show them that their democracy and mine is real, it is tangible and it is concrete.

I know that the reality of government is that privileges, no matter how small they may be, create injustice; that the size of government increases as the level of individual responsibility decreases; that those closest to the problem are best suited to solve the problem; and that political leaders are chosen to lead, not to follow.

Recently, there has been much talk regarding electoral reform and even a referendum. It must be clear to all of us here in this House that what is really needed is parliamentary reform.

When I look through the looking glass, I see that only 52% of the people still bother to vote and find value in

this Legislature. I look forward to restoring the confidence of the other 48% and to giving them cause to participate in our democracy. We know that what we need is freedom, democracy and justice, not the nanny-state mentality so prevalent in today's Liberal government thinking.

I want to reiterate the pride I feel for having been chosen by the people of my riding as their voice and as their representative in this Legislature. I look forward to the years ahead, working with my colleagues in making a more prosperous Ontario, a more effective Parliament, an Ontario that is full of honest and reasoned discussion and debate and where the Queen's Park inscription in the hallways, "Where minds and souls find freedom," resonates throughout Ontario.

I'd like to thank everyone and wish you all a very merry Christmas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member and ask if there are any questions or comments.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's certainly my pleasure to make a few comments on the speech by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and congratulate him on his election to this Legislature. I know that the maiden speech or the inaugural speech of a member is often their first opportunity to reflect upon the great honour that brings them here. I think he did that very well in his speech, although there are other things that he perhaps shared with us that may not be exactly the same as anybody else. But that's what is great about this place; right? The reality is that everybody comes from a little bit different perspective—in some cases, a big difference in perspective. Nonetheless, that's what makes this place work, that everyone comes with ideas, with passion, with experience and with commitment to work on behalf of the people who send them here. That is certainly, I think, an obligation the member demonstrated very clearly he's prepared to uphold for the people who sent him here to have a voice for his community.

I think that the Legislature will be graced with another inaugural speech tonight as well, from the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, someone who was elected in my own city to come and join me here and bring perspectives from the great area of Hamilton-Stoney Creek, to talk about his experiences, which I think will be enlightening for people. He's also someone who is very passionate about his community and also very concerned about some of the very serious issues that face Hamiltonians, not only in terms of job loss but in terms of environment and in terms of poverty and many other issues.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

Hon. David Caplan: I too want to congratulate the member on his election and on his inaugural comments.

This is a very important place, where 107 members gather to share the different views and perspectives that our neighbours, that our electorate have and on their behalf we share them. While I understand that the member has particular views and passions, I profoundly dis-

agree, and I know that the people of Don Valley East profoundly disagree with the view and the anti-government sentiments that the member brings forward. That's quite all right. That's allowed. That's encouraged. That's the way this place is supposed to work, where we have an exchange of ideas and views. It doesn't mean that the member is better or worse, or that I or any other member is, but we do all have a very sacred and solemn responsibility to uphold and to promote the views of the people who sent us here.

I do firmly disagree with the member in the sense that there is, I truly believe, a positive role for government to forge the kind of society that is a progressive one, that promotes and defends and upholds the rights of all individuals, certainly, but also acts in the best interests. In fact, that's the debate under government order G8, a bill to ban trans fats or regulate trans fats in our schools, and to ban junk food. This kind of measure is long overdue. I've heard from members of the caucus that the member is in that many members over there too believe that this is an appropriate response and action for governments to be taking. I know the member may disagree with the government taking these kinds of actions, and he is free to express them. He is free to vote against them and I am free as well to disagree with the member. But I congratulate him on bringing his views forward and look forward to many other opportunities to debate him in the future.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am so proud to stand here in support of my good friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox-Addington. He is my next-door neighbour. I'll tell you something: I'd rather be nowhere than standing one seat away from him today in this caucus, the Progressive Conservative caucus. The cookies can be all baked by them. I'll tell you that this is a man who knows where he stands. He knows he stands for responsible government, good government, property rights. He stands for his people and he's not afraid to say it like it is. That's why the good people in his riding sent him here.

I think it goes to speak to what my good friend from Hamilton said and what the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal said about this place being a debate about ideas. I can tell you something: He fits a really great spot—a great niche—in our caucus in talking about the rights of the individual and the rights of private property. He is a voice of reason when it comes to some libertarian views which have not been seen in this chamber, thanks to a government that thinks they ought to be doing everything for everyone else. It's great to have this exchange of ideas. It's great to have another strong member from eastern Ontario to work with myself, the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, and the member from Leeds-Grenville and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. We're probably the most quiet members in this entire Legislature, but our voices will be heard on some of these very critical issues of eastern Ontario that need to be addressed.

Whether it's the job losses that happened under the watch of this McGuinty government, whether it is the

infrastructure challenges that we're facing in eastern Ontario or whether it is the agriculture crisis that we're seeing in different parts of eastern Ontario, it's going to be this guy. It's going to be Randy Hillier, the voice of the people, a man who is able to make his mark with landowner groups right across this wonderful province, who's going to make his mark, speak for his people. Do you know what? He's always going to do the right thing, and not everyone here can say that.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's an honour and a privilege to be able to speak in this House. We are going to be debating Bill 8 today, a bill purportedly to ban trans fats. As I will enlarge later, the reality is—and this is a disturbing reality—that all too often what is brought before this House is fluff, puffery and marketing. Do we get real action? We get a lot of announcements.

1610

Two years ago, in 2005, a bill was passed allowing this government to promote energy efficiency by overturning covenants that would prevent the use of clotheslines at people's homes. We're not talking about anything earth-shaking; nothing that would cause the wheels of industry to fall off. We're not talking about anything that would in fact cause huge disruption anywhere. This is a small problem. If in fact the government took action, if in fact the government took the power that it gave itself when it passed the bill and acted and said, "Yes, if you want to contribute to dealing with our pollution problem, our smog problem, our climate change problem, if you want to put your clothes on a clothesline, you can do that. You can ignore these covenants"—two years later, no action. You hear from the mayor of Aurora, who speaks out on this. But do we hear, do we see action from this government? No.

Mr. Kennedy, when he was the Minister of Education, announced a ban on junk food a number of years ago. As my colleague Rosario Marchese was saying the other day, it came around, it went around, and it's come back again, once again a reannouncement without concrete action on the ground.

It's wonderful to have these bills. It would be better if the law was enforced.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has two minutes.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I want to thank the members who responded to my inaugural speech, and of course, thanks for a rousing response from my neighbour and friend Lisa MacLeod from Nepean-Carleton.

I do look forward to those disagreements. I do look forward to the discussion and the debate. That is how people learn, by engaging in discussion and debate. And I look forward to the other side becoming knowledgeable about all these subjects that we like to talk about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to start off my comments on Bill 8 with a little history about the community I represent and about myself.

My community, Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, is a culturally diverse community with a proud tradition of hard-working, sports-minded and creative people. My riding stretches from the borders of Grimsby in the east to Ottawa Street in Hamilton in the west, from the base of the escarpment to the south to Lake Ontario in the north. It has a mix of residential dwellings, small businesses, light industries and heavy industrial plants in the west. At the extreme easterly border there are even fruit farms touching the Niagara wine corridor.

History plays a big role in part of the area I represent, which could easily have gone the way of too many of our industries, falling under American control. In 1812, the Americans declared war on Britain and invaded Upper Canada from the Niagara Peninsula. An American force crossed the Niagara River and captured Fort George—now Niagara-on-the-Lake—in May 1813. With about 3,500 troops, they moved in pursuit of the British, who retreated to Burlington Heights, where Dundurn Castle now stands.

The American troops reached Stoney Creek on June 5, 1813, and settled down for the night. The Gage House was used by headquarters by the two American generals, Winder and Chandler.

At Stoney Creek, a surprise night attack was made possible through the daring assistance of a Stoney Creeker by the name of Billy Green, a local 19-year-old civilian. Billy Green went on to Burlington Heights to warn the British that the Americans were in Stoney Creek. The British decided on a night attack, and Billy acted as a scout, since he was a very experienced woodsman in our area, which he knew very well.

About 700 regulars of the 8th and 49th Regiments of Foot, under Lieutenant-Colonel John Harvey, stopped the American advance and allowed the British to re-establish their position in Niagara. During the 40-minute battle, hundreds of soldiers died, and the British captured the two American generals and some field artillery.

The Americans retreated to Forty Mile Creek—now Grimsby—and then to Fort George. The Americans never advanced so far into the Niagara Peninsula again. Each year in Stoney Creek, a re-enactment of this battle, the battle of Stoney Creek, is held in Battlefield Park.

My community is also well-known for the Winona Peach Festival, held at the end of August each year, and for the Stoney Creek Dairy, famous for its ice cream.

About my history: I come from a family of mostly steelworkers. My grandfather, my father, my cousins, uncles and brother were all tied to the steel industry. Stelco and Dofasco played a significant role in our lives. Our combined years of service in the steel business as a family surpasses 300 years.

We are also a family of diehard sports enthusiasts, at every sport, including competitive swimming, baseball, hockey, boxing, football and racquet sports. Some of my family members have competed at very high levels in their choice of sport. In my own personal endeavours, I have refereed hockey, umpired baseball, as well as playing all sports, including football. Right up until last

year, I was playing competitive old-timer hockey. I do believe that the exposure to sports and teams helps any individual develop the qualities needed to be a better person.

Why did I enter politics? I'm sure we've all been asked this question at one time or another. My interest was activated at a very young age. In the early 1960s, I was invited to visit a good friend of my family, James Tucker. We all called him Uncle Jim. He was an MP for the riding of Trinity-Conception in St. John's, Newfoundland. How did he come into contact with our family? My father was a chief petty officer in World War II in the Canadian Navy, stationed in St. John's. Officers were allowed at the time to live off base and were billeted by local families. Jim Tucker and his family were the host family to billet my father. That was where the friendship began, although, of course, it wasn't until later in the 1960s that Jim became a member of Parliament.

While in Ottawa, at the age of about 13, as a guest of Jim Tucker, I had the opportunity to meet Lester B. Pearson, John Diefenbaker, and the visiting Prime Minister of Australia. At the end of the amazing experience, because Jim wasn't able to take me back to Hamilton, he asked a newly elected MP, a young lawyer from Hamilton East, if he would mind bringing me home. That member was none other than John Munroe. So I came home on the train from Ottawa with Mr. Munroe.

I'd like to point out that both Mr. Tucker and Mr. Munroe were Liberal caucus members. I hope, in my present capacity as an NDP member, that the kindness shown to me at that time will continue.

In the years to follow that experience, I worked on several election campaigns for my uncle, a Hamilton councillor who eventually became Mayor Bill Powell. Bill was my mother's brother. At one point in his career he was a CCFer, and then an NDPer, during the Tommy Douglas years. I guess I eventually came to my senses to follow in my Uncle Bill's footsteps by endorsing the ideals and policies of the NDP.

In 1994, I decided to run myself, for city council in Stoney Creek. I was successful in my first attempt, serving my first term, then being re-elected to a second term, serving six years in all. After the amalgamation with the city of Hamilton, I left politics for a few years until circumstances and new experiences gave me the itch again, and here I sit.

Why did I get back into politics? To be honest, I only left it in an official capacity. I continued to be active in my union at Stelco, as I had been my whole working life. The work I did for the union evolved to the point where I was given the opportunity by my local union president, along with a national and international executive, to join their newly created lobby program in Ottawa. This program was designed to help change labour legislation governing pensions, benefits, employment insurance, and health and safety working conditions. I worked in conjunction with other unions regarding similar and different issues important to these unions. For example, I worked hand in hand with the transportation unions, mining

unions, ACTRA, Telus workers, and fishing unions under the steel umbrella, like the snow crab fisherman of northern New Brunswick. As well, I joined the paper mill workers from northern Ontario. The work that brought me here to Queen's Park was the lobby against the closure of paper mills in Kenora by Abitibi. In all, I've worked on nine different lobbies.

These valuable experiences, through these nine different lobbies over a period of about three years, gave me a deeper insight and brought me face-to-face, first-hand knowledge of the severe hardships that workers and their families have been going through. Every one of the lobbies I worked on and the people I met touched me deeply and began to resonate in me. I resolved that there was, is and will be a huge amount of work to be done to help and protect the working people of this province.

1620

The lobbying that hit closest to home for me was at the local level when Stelco entered CCAA. I saw that our pensions, benefits, and indeed our very futures were at stake. When I sat in union meetings and saw the frightened looks on the faces of pensioners who had invested their entire lives in their jobs, and the way the courts and companies in this province were treating these vulnerable, decent, hard-working people, that was the match that lit the fire to get me involved once again, but this time at a higher level. I knew I had a role to play.

When I started my apprenticeship at Stelco in the early seventies, the very week I was hired I had three job offers: electrical apprenticeship at Firestone, millwright at Westinghouse and ironworker at Stelco. Because of my family ties to the company, I chose Stelco. Lucky I did, because Westinghouse is all but gone, Firestone is gone and Stelco is now US Steel Canada, which is barely keeping its head above water in Hamilton. When I started at Stelco, we had 13,400 hourly employees at Hilton Works, with seven or eight subsidiaries throughout Hamilton employing hundreds of other good-paying jobs. When I left Stelco in June, we were employing just over 1,700—unbelievable.

As many of you know, Hamilton has become the home to dozens of major companies, offering plenty of employment. It has been the industrial heartland of Ontario. But now all those subsidiaries of Stelco that employed all those people, of course, are gone, along with Firestone, Massey-Ferguson, Procter and Gamble, Continental Can, Dominion Glass, Westinghouse, Inglis, Otis Elevator, Canada Works, Frost Fence, Levi Strauss, Rheem Canada, Camco, American Can—the list goes on. In the seventies, it was almost bumper to bumper traffic along Burlington Street and you could have to leave work early to get a parking spot. But you could fire a canon off and not hit anything now. Hamilton is becoming an industrial ghost town. For this reason and others, I was saddened to see in the throne speech no concrete plan, no specifics of substance to bring Hamilton back to its heyday.

Along with job loss, our city has been hit with social downloading costs which have all but crippled our city

and surrounding communities. We have a population of almost 600,000 with the surrounding areas, and there are 90,000—90,000—seniors, single parents, children and handicapped people living below the poverty level. That's almost 18% of our population. This is an embarrassment to this province. With such a well-to-do province and so many other communities that are well off, it's a sad story.

The NDP and Mr. Hampton have asked time and time again for this government to do something now, not four years from now. We can no longer afford to procrastinate. We have a crisis on our hands in the Hamilton area, as well as in other fine communities in this great province. Our call must be answered to give real help to those most vulnerable in our society: more subsidized housing, increases to the minimum wage, tenant protection, dental health coverage for low-income families, reinstatement to low-income families of pain management therapies like chiropractic and physiotherapy, increases to ODSP and Ontario Works rates, an immediate end to the clawback of the national child benefit, and better health care for seniors.

We need a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of daily nursing and personal care for seniors in long-term care, and more hospices to give people some comfort and dignity when they are facing terminal illnesses. Family caregivers need our support now.

We must reinstate Ontario's traditional role of paying 50% of public transit operating costs so cash-strapped municipalities that are struggling can freeze transit fares and get more cars off the road.

We need a fair funding system for local sports associations, not favouring one city over another.

And we need to fix, once and for all, the educational funding formula.

Beyond these, we need an expansion of the passenger rail links to Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the Niagara region to cut down on the number of cars clogging our highways. The existing rail lines could include more passenger service, which would improve the environment and be more efficient and could be used to enhance our economic development and tourism in the Niagara corridor.

Equally crucial to the economy is the revitalization of our industrial heartlands. We have to stop eroding our base industries with foreign takeovers. We must have more Canadian control and content. This erosion in our economy of good-paying jobs must stop now, before we lose all control over our future.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not thank the many volunteers, my campaign committee, my friends and supporters, my friends in the South Asian community, and my brothers and sisters in the steel industry for their steadfast support, but, most of all, my family. To my wife, Carole, I say that without your love, support and encouragement to help me strive to be the best I can be, I would not be sitting here today. Thanks to my recently deceased mother, whose devotion to the community and to others was an inspiration to me; to my

father, who has been gone for some 15 years, whose work ethic was unwavering; to my brother, Bob, and my sister, Lois, for setting excellent examples of hard work, achievement and contribution to their communities; and to my children, Paula, Meredith and Sheri, who make me proud every single day. I thank you all.

Finally, I would like to thank all the support staff here at Queen's Park and in my constituency office for their excellent work, and our leader, Howard Hampton, and the caucus members who have made me feel so welcome and have gone out of their way to advise me and guide me through this process. I'm honoured to be able to serve the constituents of Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and I look forward to the fulfilling challenges that lie ahead over the next four years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member for his remarks. Questions or comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to congratulate the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for a very sincere and heartfelt inaugural speech. Certainly, he demonstrated his passion for his area and passion for his causes. I think that's what brought us all here, and I think he did a very effective job of transmitting that to us here and the people back home.

It's interesting, he mentioned his history with the steel industry. I just reminded myself that my father worked for 18 years in the steel industry too. He worked for American Standard here in Toronto. We sometimes forget that Toronto has a lot of workers in industry of all kinds. Many of those industries have closed down. If I recall correctly, my father worked for 18 years, and I think he ended up with a pension of \$85 a month. After 18 years working in a mill, in intense heat and horrible conditions, he walked away with literally nothing. So I can understand the member's passion for workers.

It's an interesting contrast. We had the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who had a passion for helping people and the importance of the government's role in giving people a helping hand. On the other hand, we just had the Conservative member with his opening speech, who was basically saying, "Well, we don't need government. Government should back off." That's the real challenge we have here in this Legislature, that we've got to find the appropriate mechanisms, whether it's an industry, whether it's a city, whether it's a group of individuals. Sometimes they do need government. They can't do it themselves, whether they're children, the disabled, the elderly who are on small pensions, or cities that are in tough times. Sometimes government has to be proactive, and it cannot do it without the support of this Legislature to get these people the help they need.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to congratulate the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek on his inaugural speech today. I also worked in industry, and I can relate to a lot of the comments that the honourable member made in his inaugural speech. I commend him on his remarks for standing up for the downtrodden in Hamilton and all of Ontario. I look forward to working

with him and with all the members of the Legislature as we advance the interests of the people of Ontario—his riding, my riding and all the ridings.

I'd like to wish all of the members the best of the season, and a merry Christmas.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to say to my good friend and colleague the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, congratulations on what is your inaugural speech, although you've already made an impression on this House over the last couple of weeks. You've managed to introduce the first private member's bill of the session; and not only did you introduce the first private member's bill of the session, but you actually got it passed and into committee. It looks like we're going to get, hopefully, at the end of the day, some committee time.

1630

I've been watching with interest because, as his colleague and as his whip, he's really good at doing his House duty most of the time. We're going to be working on improvements in that particular area very soon. I just also want to say that he's made an impression on all of us here. For somebody who has come in from municipal politics, from a trade union background, he brings a wealth of experience and he brings, I think, some presence when it comes to being a strong advocate for the people of Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. He knows as well as I that a number of us in this Legislature represent ridings where we've had some economic difficulties. Hamilton, I know from the discussions I've had with the member for Hamilton—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Centre.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Centre. They always change the names on me. That's why I would never be the Speaker in this place; I just couldn't do that. I'd say, "Hey, you, it's your turn." But Hamilton has undergone an extreme amount of difficulty economically over the past number of years, and what's been very frustrating is that the response by this government has been not even luke-warm. This is really the sad part.

I look at places across the constituency that I represent and across northern Ontario, even in the previous Minister of Natural Resources' own riding, where entire communities have lost their single employer and the response of the government has been, "Do you guys want to borrow some money?" It's like saying to the person who has limited out on their mortgage and their line of credit and their Visa and everything else, "We've got a solution for you. We're going to lend you more money." How are you going to pay for it if you have no revenue coming in?

I congratulate the member on a fine first speech.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I enjoyed very much my colleague from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek and, in fact, my neighbour. Under some boundary changes, I am his neighbour both to the east and to the south. I want to congratulate him on his very successful election victory. Welcome to the assembly. Already, as my colleague from Timmins—James Bay said, he has been very impactful in his first session in this Legislature with a successful private member's bill.

I went through Mr. Miller's riding a few times in the campaign because, as I said, we're neighbours. He had a very effective campaign, obviously. Certainly Tara Crugnale, our candidate, was an excellent candidate who had my support, but I will tell you that I was also impressed with Mr. Miller's campaign. I saw a lot of orange NDP signs at the busy intersection at Centennial and King, I guess it would be. Very eye-catching.

Mr. Miller, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, and I have a number of issues in common, both representing Stoney Creek taxpayers and both advocating for Hamilton area issues. I agree with his observations that the manufacturing sector has been hard hit by the Dalton McGuinty government's policies.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As Rosario would say, they've been whacked.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Some 150,000 manufacturing jobs have "fled" from the province of Ontario, as my colleague from Jim's Bay—James Bay. Timmins—James Bay. That's terrible. I'm not getting as much sleep as I used to. They have been whacked, and sadly, the Hamilton area has been a poster child for those job losses.

I also share his goal of improving transit systems in the area, those links within the larger area of Hamilton and, importantly, the links then from Hamilton into the GTA. I know getting a better deal for Hamilton taxpayers will be something that we will have in common as well. When a deal was made for the GTA municipalities, sadly, Hamilton was left out. We'll work together to correct that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek has two minutes.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to express my thanks to my colleagues for their kind words, and I look forward to working with all members of government in the next four years to do what's best for the people of my community and for Ontario. I'd also like to thank the member for Hamilton Centre for her kind words when she initiated the announcement that I'd be speaking today.

We are in a transition period in government. Our province has been hard hit with lots of downloading problems and manufacturing loss and job loss. I think this government, and all sides of the House, are going to work toward improving the situation with this economic—well, I guess I'd call it a windfall today that has been announced by the Liberals. I hope that the governing body is going to send some money towards Hamilton and Niagara to bolster our struggling situation. A lot of times, the money that is announced on days like this has a tendency, for some reason, to stay east of Burlington, including Burlington, in the province. It's unfortunate, because it's almost like the western part of our province is forgotten.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And so are the north and the south and the east.

Mr. Paul Miller: And the Welland area, too, as Mr. Kormos points out.

I think it's time that we started throwing some of the government money a little west of Burlington. There are people west of Burlington. There are some pretty large cities: Windsor, Hamilton. We need help. We're in rough shape. All these announcements about infrastructure and all these announcements that have been made today have been made before, and frankly, I haven't seen a heck of a lot of improvement in our area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I wanted to start off by wishing everyone the best of the season and a Merry Christmas in the days to come.

I also wish to congratulate the previous speaker, the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, on his very fine inaugural address. He spoke very, very well, and I was interested in hearing about the history of his riding and of Stoney Creek and about the battles that were fought between the Americans and the British at that time.

I wanted to start off by quoting an author. Her name is Venice Bloodworth. She was an author of a type of physics known as metaphysics; the word “meta” in Greek means “after.” Basically, she said 60 years ago in one of her books that the greatest battles in the future would not be battles of steel and bullets but battles of ideas. And what we have before us today is a set of ideas that are contained in Bill 8. The bill which is in front of me now is An Act to Amend the Education Act, and the idea that's contained in this act is quite simple. It's an idea to ban trans fats from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias. It's a simple idea, yet it's a very important one, and in the next couple of minutes I want to explain why.

I've had a chance to visit a lot of the schools in my riding of Scarborough Southwest, both the high schools and the public schools, some of the larger schools in the riding like Cardinal Newman and Neil McNeil, which is on the border of my riding, and many of the smaller schools like St. Agatha and Mason Road Junior Public School. A lot of the kids have to eat their lunches at the schools and have to eat whatever is provided for in the cafeterias, so they are limited in their choice. We here in the Legislature have the opportunity to change what that choice is.

The act in front of us says schools have to begin to eliminate trans fats from their cafeterias. I guess a person would ask, “What is a trans fat?” Maybe 20 or 30 years ago, nobody would really care what a trans fat was or wouldn't really know what a trans fat was. The definition of trans fat is quite simple. It's an industrially created product. What's basically done is that plant oils are hydrogenated, they're heated, and the goal of it is to put that into food, for baking or for other reasons, to extend its life on the shelf. The end result of the trans fat is that it's not beneficial for human beings to consume that.

It's universally recognized now that eating trans fat increases your risk of coronary heart disease. How does it do that? Most people understand now about good

cholesterol and bad cholesterol. A trans fat reduces your good cholesterol, known as your HDL, and raises your bad cholesterol, known as your LDL. For pretty well anyone who is over 40 years of age—and I fall into that category—when you go to visit your doctor for your annual checkup, they will do a blood test and will look for the levels of your cholesterol. Many people do suffer from high levels of bad cholesterol and low levels of good cholesterol. These problems don't necessarily start from the first day you decide to consume this food; it takes several years of consuming the bad trans fat and putting it into your system. Years and years of this cause the veins in your body to collect the bad cholesterol and put a lining of the bad trans fat into your veins, which eventually causes the heart problem because the space for the blood to flow through the veins becomes narrower and narrower, as we all well know.

1640

I'm not a doctor, but I think the idea is quite a simple idea, and the solution or the act that's put before us today is a very simple one; that is, stop selling products that contain this trans fat which causes the bad cholesterol and lowers the good cholesterol, which leads to coronary disease.

When I visit schools in my riding and I see the kids having their lunch at their school cafeteria, I don't want them, in Scarborough Southwest or in any part of Ontario, consuming bad trans fats, because 20, 30 or 40 years later those trans fats will cause them to have heart disease, will cause them to have coronary disease and problems with their health.

The McGuinty government is taking a proactive approach here in saying, “Let's get this material removed from our schools. Let's provide the kids, the students with healthy food in their diets, alternative food than what is presently offered in cafeterias.” A lot of it, the hamburgers and french fries, are coated with or contain trans fats, which are then consumed and stay in the system and cause the bad problems.

The idea contained in here is a simple one: It's prevention—preventing trans fats, preventing bad health, preventing heart attacks, preventing expensive health care when these people end up in hospitals years from now having bypass surgery, which is very, very common. I've met hundreds of constituents in my riding who have told me they've had bypass surgery. One of the main reasons they have it is that their veins get clogged. What do they get clogged with? Trans fats. Why wait until a person is 45, 50 or 60 years old to deal with the problem? Why not deal with it at the high school level or public school level? I'm sure children don't want to see themselves 40 years in the future in a hospital bed or on an operating table having to go through the experience of bypass surgery, which then costs the government millions of dollars every year in bypass surgery operations, more and more, as the solution to this problem. If we prevent it, then the number of operations goes down, and the number of people who have to go for surgery is reduced as well.

Prevention is the key. Whether it be in the area of health, whether it be in the area of fire, crime, car accidents or any other type of activity, the key word nowadays in the 21st century is "prevention"—to prevent these types of things. Even on the global stage, whether it be war, genocide or anything, the idea is to prevent it before it happens. This idea before us here today is a simple one: Prevent this illness, prevent this disease before it happens.

I would be remiss if I didn't add something else very briefly in my statement here today, and that is that I look at the federal government—and I know we've been having discussions about what the federal government does and does not do. One of the big problems is that they import a lot of products and they don't put the expiry dates on their products. We've got a lot of products coming into the country from other countries without expiry dates. These things sit on shelves for nobody knows how many years. Nobody knows what is in these products after something has been in a can, a bottle, a bag or some other container for 10, maybe 12 or even 15 years, since there's no expiry date on it. I call upon the federal government—and it's something that I'm going to be undertaking more of in the next few months. Constituents have brought this to my attention as well, that we need to start dating some of these products, saying, "This product expires in two years," or in five years, to have an actual expiry date on it, so that it's not just sitting on a shelf and someone accidentally buys it and then gets sick as a result or ends up consuming a huge amount of trans fat.

This is something that needs to be addressed quite strongly. That's something the federal government needs to look into. God knows why we allow—maybe God doesn't know why, but there is a reason, I guess, why the federal government is allowing the importation of some of these products without any expiry date from countries throughout the world.

Getting back to the bill itself, I applaud the Minister of Education, Kathleen Wynne, and I applaud the government and the Premier for bringing this bill forward. It's an important first step and it indicates and signals that this government is concerned about the health of the students and the young people of this province. It amends the Education Act, so it's important. It's not simply a stand-alone act; it amends an important piece of legislation, the Education Act, and adds a section to it concerning the health of our students and concerning the food they eat.

I personally think it's a strong message to send and that it says we are concerned. We are concerned about the children. We are concerned about their future. We are concerned about their health. Someone might say, "Well, they're young and whatever they eat is going to be consumed and will run through their system and will not be kept in their body." But we know better now. Studies have shown, and we can go on the Internet and find out or we can talk to doctors or specialists or chemists or people who know this, that unsaturated trans fat starts

accumulating at a young age and causes that continuous growth throughout the years and causes the problem, eventually, of narrowing the arteries and perhaps even closing the arteries completely.

So many people we see, even the television celebrities we see, have suffered from heart attacks and strokes as a result of clogged arteries. It's only if they're able to be caught in time—whether it be by the hospital when they arrive or by someone who's around who's able to catch them in time and bring them to a hospital and let them quickly have that bypass surgery.

I remember maybe eight or nine years ago that David Letterman, of all people, who is a night show host on television, suffered a heart attack. It was just by luck that he got to the hospital in time. He was unconscious for a bit, they were able to do the bypass surgery, and now he's back on television. I think Henry Kissinger had bypass surgery years ago—so many people. We all know people. We could all name people who have had bypass surgery.

That surgery costs money. It costs hundreds of thousands of dollars per surgery. When you think about the entire province of Ontario and the over 12 million people in it, and the number who have had this type of surgery, it's a real strain on our health system. Of course, a lot of this is paid for by the Ministry of Health to save these people and to keep them alive and healthy.

Prevention, starting early right in the classroom, right in the school, right in the early years, is the way to go and the way to prevent this type of illness from ever surfacing at all in the first place.

I think this is an excellent piece of legislation. It's an excellent first step. It's an excellent way to tell our children and our students that we care about them, that we want to help them, that 30, 40 years from now we don't want to see them under a knife on an operating table in a hospital getting double, triple, quadruple or whatever bypass surgery. If more than one vein is clogged, then more than one vein has to be replaced. It comes either from the leg or some other part of the body and is placed into the heart region.

It was interesting, because even this past election as I was canvassing, at some of the doors where I knocked people would have a shirt on, and I met one gentleman whose shirt was cut fairly low and you could see the scar starting just below the throat. We began talking, and he said he'd recently had that exact surgery, bypass surgery, and that it was caused by eating certain kinds of food, and as a result they had to open up his body and place new veins into his heart. So we want to see that decreased.

1650

It's interesting that our government does this in other areas as well. We've been big on preventing crime, and that was started last term as well. We've been big on education on all sorts of other levels, to pre-empt things from happening that would cost us—the government or the people of Ontario—more money further down the road.

This government is very, very direct in what its message is: to prevent and keep people healthy, to focus on health, to focus on education, and to focus on a good Ontario. We are on track, I believe, to creating the greatest place in the world to live. I can't think of any other place where this type of action is taken, where this type of legislation is brought in, and where it becomes one of the first major pieces we're debating here right after the election. One would say, "Why aren't we debating other things?" But what's more important than the health of our young people, the ones that will be taking care of us when we get older down the road, the ones that will be the doctors, the nurses, the lawyers, and the leaders of our country and our province in the future? We're looking forward into the future and trying to make them as healthy as possible so that they can help us, help themselves and help our society, and also not cost our society any money.

I know we have pages present here today—they're either listening or not listening—but what we're doing today and what we're passing today will probably help them down the road in their life when they move on from this Legislature and their school years, and move on to university and hopefully adopt a healthy-eating lifestyle. We even created a Ministry of Health Promotion here, which I think is important, to promote the health and well-being of our people here in Ontario, and I applaud the government for doing that as well.

With those comments, I stand today in support of this legislation and hope that it moves on to committee and is fully debated there, that we hear from deputants, and that it comes back for third reading sometime when this Legislature comes back.

I thank you for the opportunity, and look forward to questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments? The Chair recognizes the honourable member from Hamilton—or Halton; excuse me.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Halton—just a little northeast of Hamilton, Mr. Speaker, but thank you for taking a stab at it. I know this is going to be an issue that you are going to study hard, and by the time we come back—when do we come back? At the end of March or something? This government doesn't like to work very hard, but I think we come back at the end of March, and we'll be hard at it. I know that you'll know all of the ridings in the House by that time and be able to go through them as well as the table does when they're reading a speech.

The member spoke about trans fats and where they come from, how they are a non-naturally occurring product in our diets, and how they should be eliminated as quickly as possible. I think that industry, far beyond this piece of legislation—which is really just a photo op and a bit of fluff for this government—has eliminated the vast majority of trans fats that existed in our diets and in our foodstuffs over the past two, three, or four years. This was something that was recognized early on as being bad for people, bad to take into our bodies, and as such, the vast majority of that has been eliminated from food

manufacturing. Many manufacturers are advertising on their packaging that trans fats are not included in their manufacture, and that's a very good thing for our diets and for the future of our health care dollars, let alone the health and well-being of our citizens in Ontario.

So it's an interesting bill. It's typical that it is going to create a little photo op for the government, but it's really not going to do very much, because we're not going to look at lunches that are brought to school, we're not going to look at things that students bring into the classroom. All we're doing is making a very small attempt—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you, honourable member. The Chair recognizes the member from Hamilton Centre.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to remark on the speech from the member from Scarborough Southwest. I have to say that he did an admirable job of describing the difficulty that trans fats bring in terms of our physical well-being and then extrapolated that, of course, as many other speakers have in regard to this particular bill, to the resulting cost or burden on the health care system in the province of Ontario. He did an excellent job at that.

The problem is that when you look at what the bill does and what it doesn't do, you begin to learn very quickly that the bill does not, in fact, ban trans fats, which is what I think the government is liking people to think is what the bill does. But, in fact, it doesn't do that. That is one of the things that's problematic with this particular bill: that the government is saying one thing and when you read the bill, doing something else entirely.

What the bill says is that they can at some point regulate trans fats, or perhaps they may do something to make a difference, but the bill itself does not do that. I think the one thing that we need to be wary about in the province of Ontario is the idea that trans fats are the only evil or the one place for everyone to put their attention. I think that leads to a situation where perhaps attention is not being given to other issues and concerns when it comes to what kinds of snacks and foods our children, our young people, our youth particularly, are encouraged to or given the opportunity to consume in their schools. I think the government can get a lot more serious about this issue and be a lot more active about this issue. I know my friend Peter Tabuns from Toronto—Danforth is going to be speaking about this bill to give them some good ideas.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I just want to congratulate you on your new position. I know with your vast experience here in the House that you will be a very fair individual when you're in the chair looking after the affairs of this House.

The member from Scarborough Southwest—a very distinguished member. He had a great career as a former councillor in the old city of Scarborough, then went on to

Toronto after amalgamation. He knows these issues well, because he's a man that I know visits schools on a continuing basis in his riding of Scarborough Southwest. He knows of the need to get rid of trans fats in our elementary and secondary schools.

This is a very progressive piece of legislation building on our previous work, bringing back 20 minutes of mandatory physical education in our schools in Ontario and building on the good work of the member from Don Valley West, our current Minister of Education, who's really seen across this country as a leading light when it comes to education.

Next week on Wednesday, December 19, I will be visiting the grade 5 class in St. Paul's Elementary School in Norwood, Ontario, part of the great riding of Peterborough. That will give me the opportunity to bring this very positive message that we have here on Bill 8 about eliminating trans fats in school cafeterias at the elementary and secondary level.

You know, this government has a history of building in Ontario—building on what we've done in the previous four years and looking forward in a very optimistic fashion at building the next four years. We had the Minister of Finance just this afternoon deliver good news about the economy in the province of Ontario. We will continue over the next years to talk about our good news, whether it's in health care, whether it is in education, whether it's economy. We need all of us together to talk up the Ontario economy this time because there are a lot of positive things that are happening.

To the member from Scarborough Southwest, I want to take the opportunity to wish him and his family a very merry Christmas. Keep up your good work. The electors of Scarborough Southwest made the right decision on October 10.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thanks to the member for Scarborough Southwest for his comments on the bill before us today: a lot of platitudes about how banning trans fats is going to revolutionize diets in young people across the province of Ontario.

I do want to ask, perhaps as the question aspect of questions and comments, the underutilized part of the so-called two-minute hits—Mr. Speaker, if you will I'll ask some questions of the member as opposed to making comments of my own. Perhaps he could reflect in his two minutes' summation time what foods specifically will no longer be found in cafeterias if this bill were to pass? For example, I ask because Frito Lay announced not too long ago in the news article of the Associated Press—September 24, 2002, actually—that Frito Lay, whose chips are frequently a target for nutritionists, “said Tuesday it would eliminate an especially harmful type of fat from its product and offer more reduced-fat snacks” by early next year—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: That was five years ago.

1700

Mr. Tim Hudak: As my friend from Halton says, that was five years ago. Frito Lay said it will switch from

hydrogenated oils containing trans fatty acids to corn oil in cooking some of its more popular salty chips, such as Doritos, Tostitos and Cheetos. So a lot of these so-called snacks will still be available in the schools; they're simply not trans fat. They'll have other types of fat products in them.

Similarly, I think the minister has given herself the ability to exempt certain foods on special snack days, like pizzas and such, so those will continue to be in schools. So perhaps the minister could respond to my question to tell me specifically what snacks will no longer be in school cafeterias. Or is this bill more so one of “the emperor has no clothes,” a lot of noise but actually, at the end of the day, no substance?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Scarborough Southwest has two minutes for his summation.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I wanted to thank the members from Halton, Hamilton Centre, Peterborough, and Niagara West—Glanbrook for their comments.

Just quickly to answer the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook, it's not for me, with the greatest respect, to pick out those foods, because in the bill here itself, subsection 318(1): “A board shall ensure that a food or beverage offered for sale to pupils in a cafeteria of a school of the board does not contain more than the prescribed amount or percentage of trans fat.” I figure the prescribed amount will probably be done through regulation by cabinet. I would think that it's pretty plain to see that there are certain foods—I've seen them in the schools that I've gone into—that contain high levels of fats, and the kids might not know about it.

Frito Lay does a number of different things. They bake some of their chips. Baked chips are fine; they're baked. If you want to put them into hydrogenated oil, then you're going to create a trans fat. If you're going to put them into some other type of oil, you'll be creating perhaps even some other type of by-product which is not going to be healthy for the person.

Again, I am not the expert in the area. We are legislators, not doctors. I do appreciate the comment, but there are also chocolate bars and other items that you can see on the side say they contain high levels of trans fats, which are not healthy. Those contents can be read on the side. But the boards of the various schools will decide that, and I encourage that—just like somebody decided 30 or 40 years ago to put fluoride in water. I was young at the time. It was a great idea, because we have the best teeth here. The people in Ontario have great teeth, and the reason is that someone put fluoride in the water. It was a decision made and upheld, somewhat controversially. But as a result, if you travel abroad to other countries, and I don't want to mention names—China—you'll see that their teeth are not the greatest, with the greatest of respect. Fluoride protects our teeth; hopefully this bill will protect our youth.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise on debate on this bill. To my friend from Scarborough Southwest, I don't

know if I actually got the answer I was looking for on naming specific snacks that will no longer be around if this bill passes—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apples are okay.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Apples? There are some sensational apples grown in the province of Ontario. Chudleigh's Farm is one renowned for the high-quality apples. I will, while we're on the topic of apples, point out that the apple growers, tender fruit growers and grape growers in the province of Ontario are still looking for a replant program to help them compete with farmers that are unfairly subsidized abroad. I hope that's something the agriculture minister will be looking at in the time ahead. Regrettably, it was not part of the economic statement today, but I know that members on this side of the House will continue to press that issue.

For the record, I want to make sure that I didn't give the wrong impression in Hansard today during question period. I should have said "a temporary shutdown of the Windsor plant" today in question period. Some 5,000 workers, sadly, have been given notice two weeks before Christmas of the shutdown in the new year. I gave the impression that it was a permanent shutdown. I regret giving that impression. It's a temporary shutdown, but nonetheless, it illustrates that the auto sector is hemorrhaging jobs in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario in Ford, Chrysler, GM and in the parts sector. For every job that Dalton McGuinty claims he created, some three jobs have been lost in the area. Certainly, to hear the Premier herald his record when it comes to the auto sector on the same day that 5,000 people got the notice of the temporary shutdown in Windsor is not at all helpful.

To get to the bill at hand, I think it's important too that we set the stage. This legislative session has been, I say to my colleague from Halton, about two weeks?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Two weeks.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Two weeks, this legislative session.

We had the general election campaign and then we had about, what, two months? Almost two months. October 10 was election day. The House came back into session, if memory serves, December 4, was it?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: December 4.

Mr. Tim Hudak: December 4, or so. Mr. Speaker, you correct me if I'm wrong.

So, almost two months of a break between the election day and when this House came back into session, and then what did we actually see? The only bill that's really been debated in that entire time is a bill to eliminate trans fats from school cafeterias. It's not even clear—and I've not yet had an answer—in terms of what snacks are actually going to be missing, because many manufacturers now don't use trans fats. So Frito-Lay chips, for example, that many people would associate with an unhealthy food choice, particularly when consumed in large volumes, would still be in the school cafeterias. I hope my friend from Peterborough, who I know has followed this issue intensely, given the Quaker comments he was making the other day, perhaps can inform the House of exactly what snacks will disappear the day after this bill is proclaimed.

It was interesting that my colleague from Scarborough Southwest also noted that by regulation it will determine the trans fat level. So it doesn't effectively really ban trans fats; it allows the executive council to determine the percentage of trans fats that will be permitted in foods. I do look forward to finding out, maybe through estimates committee, what particular civil servants will be in charge in determining that percentage of trans fats. I'm not sure, in a day and age when 150,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost in Ontario, when wait lists are growing for important health care procedures and we're seeing increased violence in our cities and in our schools, that investing money in more civil servants to determine the appropriate percentage of trans fats would be a priority for most taxpayers. In fact, I think quite the opposite.

Back to my main point: We had a two-month break, practically, from the last election campaign. You'd think a government in its second mandate would have some grand ambition of where it wants to take Ontario, some big plan to improve our schools, our health care and the state of our economy, for example. The only bill that's been debated is this rather meagre offering to, I guess, shift the types of Frito-Lay chips that are going to be there in the school cafeterias.

Our first day in the Legislature—and, really, it has not even been a two-week session in terms of debate of bills. Our first day we elected the Speaker, and congratulations to the Speaker and his Deputy Speaker, and the member for Scarborough Southwest for putting his name forward, among others. The second day, we had the speech from the throne, and then the first week was done, really, right? We had the Liberals comment then on the speech from the throne, and the first week was done. So no bills were debated. Then in the second week the official opposition commented on the speech from the throne. Then the third party commented on the speech from the throne. All of these sessions, by tradition, ended early. There were no evening sittings. So, in reality, we've only had a couple of days of debate on actual bills, and if you look at the grand plan and the great resolve for the 2007 fall-winter sitting—rather meagre offerings. The only thing here is this trans fat ban. I don't even think it's going to pass before the session has expired. I don't know.

I think that reflects a government potentially dangerously adrift, if they think that the most important priority in the province of Ontario in the meagre days that we sit in 2007's fall-winter session is this trans fat ban.

Let me talk about the bill in a bit more detail. Even if you agree with the Dalton McGuinty government that the most pressing issue for this Legislature to deal with immediately after an election is a ban on some snack foods in cafeterias, even if you agree with that, you would wonder, is this the most important issue in education in Ontario?

Having had the opportunity to go door-to-door—whether it's in Glanbrook or upper Stoney Creek, Pelham, Grimsby, Lincoln or West Lincoln—I don't think this issue came up once at the doors. I don't think I

had one individual who said to me, "You know what I really want to see? I really want to see those cupcakes banned from cafeterias," or "My goodness, there's just too many doughnuts being scarfed down in our schools."

1710

Instead, when it came to education priorities, certainly the massive increase of portables in the province of Ontario under the Dalton McGuinty government has been extraordinary. Parents were talking about the failed so-called hard cap policy of the McGuinty government and its impact on a large number of portables, split classes, and a record level of three-way split classes now in evidence in the province today. Double splits are commonplace.

Let me give you an example. The Niagara Catholic board, under the McGuinty government, has seen an 11% increase in the number of portables in their area. Wait lists for autism services, whether outside of school or support in school, have increased. And I would suggest that far more parents are more concerned about assisting autistic children in their learning, or getting rid of all these portables, than they would be about banning Frito-Lay chips or what have you. It does show a curious set of priorities by this government.

Here's a story from the *Toronto Star*, September 3, 2007: "Cash-Strapped Schools Struggle to Root Out Sources of Violence; Back to School Lessons in Safety, Co-Operation and Tolerance." Let's hear some of the text:

"One week before Jordan Manners was killed at C.W. Jefferys, a student at an east-end Toronto high school was severely beaten by as many as 50 students as 200 others watched." Doug Joliffe, who heads the Toronto district of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, made some comments about this.

The story goes on to note that "a report last week cited 'serious safety concerns' ... almost all the city's high schools have had their share of assaults on teachers or students, not to mention bullying and intimidation."

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know that this member cares deeply about publicly funded education in Ontario, but according to 23(b) in the rules of debate, he should be staying to the subject at hand, which is Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've been listening very carefully to the honourable member, and he has been talking about education and Bill 8.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: We always pull out 23(b) when we don't like the way things are going.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know. My friend from Halton is correct. I'm clearly talking about Bill 8 and the strange priorities of Bill 8, particularly in light of the increase in school violence in the city of Toronto and across the province of Ontario. I know the minister doesn't like to hear that or be reminded of it, but it is a fact. It needs to be addressed, and I'm surprised it wasn't a priority piece of legislation as opposed to the attack on Frito-Lay chips.

According to the article, "Toronto trustee Cathy Dandy goes one step further. She believes 'what happened at C.W. Jefferys could happen anywhere'....

"After Manners was killed"—a great tragedy—"the Toronto District School Board struck a panel, headed by lawyer Julian Falconer, which released an interim report last week on the conditions at C.W. Jefferys.

"While it identified serious problems there—almost 40% of students reported they had been threatened with physical harm, and 37% said they had been assaulted—the panel felt the numbers would be no different at any other Toronto school."

So I would have expected a piece of legislation to come forward to address the violence in our schools—the weapons in the school place, on the school grounds—in the article I've just spoken of, but instead of trying to ban weapons or make some strides in reducing school violence, we're going to ban doughnuts. That's what the priorities of Bill 8 tell me about where this government is at when it comes to educational priorities in the province of Ontario.

Let me go on to a few other items. Standardized testing: I was very proud to be part of a government that brought in standardized testing in the province of Ontario so that we can measure how our students are doing. To make sure that we're achieving and competing against the best in the world is a reality in this year.

I know that at the time, in fact, the Ontario Liberals opposed standardized testing. They didn't think our students should be measured, I suppose. They were satisfied with an education system that didn't follow how well students were doing. While in opposition, Dalton McGuinty vehemently opposed standardized testing.

It was an unpopular position, obviously. Dalton McGuinty had another one of his classic flip-flops on this position, and the 2003 version of Dalton McGuinty was different from that which we had seen in the 1990s. So in 2003, Dalton McGuinty embraced standardized testing, contrary to the positions he had taken here in the assembly only a short time before. Then he made one of his infamous Dalton McGuinty promises, promising that 75% of our students would meet or exceed the provincial standard on province-wide tests. Dalton then later backed away from that promise, one of the 50 or so broken promises of Dalton McGuinty's mandate, and Dalton then later clarified that the target applies only to grade 6 students and would be set for 2008, conveniently after the next provincial election.

Dalton McGuinty at the same time watered down the standardized testing and watered down the standards in the curriculum. He made 165 high school courses easier in 2005. He compromised standardized testing; for example, students now being allowed to use calculators, given more time, more multiple-choice questions, and only spending six hours being tested compared to 10 on earlier tests. So despite the fact that he lowered the bar when it comes to standardized testing in the province of Ontario—and you've got to wonder about this approach. In order to try to get to an even watered-down campaign promise, to lower the bar for our students in order to achieve a political goal is, I think, a sad comment on how seriously Dalton McGuinty took these tests. In fact, he

wasn't really committed to them in the first place. So he watered them down—I've given some examples of such—and despite lowering the bar, Dalton McGuinty still fell well short of the commitments he had made in the 2003 campaign. The 2007 standardized testing results for students in reading, writing and math released by the EQAO did not come close to meeting the student achievement guarantee in Dalton McGuinty's 2003 platform. The results show that despite lowering standards, only 64% of grade 6 students met or exceeded the provincial standard in reading, 61% in writing, and 59% in math. Dalton McGuinty promised 75% and barely got the bar to 60%.

So again, if not addressing school violence, I thought we might see some sort of emphasis on the quality agenda, trying to ensure that our students can compete, when they graduate, with the best in the world, to try to raise those scores, to try to get somewhere near what Dalton McGuinty promised the parents in 2003, but no. Instead, the main priority for Dalton McGuinty in this new session—set aside the economy, job loss and health care—was to ban trans fats in certain snack foods in high school and elementary school cafeterias. This follows, of course, with the priority in the first mandate of the McGuinty government, which was to ban gummi bears from elementary schools, to chase the Three Musketeers down the hall and out the door in elementary schools. Meanwhile, class sizes in many grades increased, portables increased, there was a lack of capital investment in local schools, but, my goodness, there are no more gummi bears in those snack machines. The Three Musketeers have been vanquished. They are no more. More portables, larger class sizes in many grades, standardized testing falling below what was promised—that's not important. My goodness, there are no more Bar Sixes hanging around our school cafeterias.

Dalton McGuinty made certain promises to address shortcomings in the funding formula: promises too on that infamous list of 50-plus broken promises. Dalton McGuinty reallocated over \$500 million in local priorities grants and the learning opportunities grant away from the classroom and towards teachers' salaries. Now, if you were going to make an increase in teachers' salaries, support staff, principals, etc, you would think you would bring new money in from the provincial budget in order to do so, but what Dalton McGuinty did was he robbed from the local priorities grant and learning opportunities grant, meaning that less money was invested in going directly to students as a result of these changes.

1720

In 2005, the Auditor General conducted a thorough review of the ESL program. The report concluded that the Ministry of Education did not require or bother to track the efficacy of these programs or that the moneys allocated were actually spent on ESL. I know the Minister of—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All right; we were doing really well for the last couple of hours. I'd

just ask that the cross-floor banter tone down a little bit. I know people are trying to wish each other merry Christmas and season's greetings, but most of you aren't in your seats, and I can hear your conversations up here. The honourable member.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you. I enjoy my colleagues' comments. I don't know if they're exactly wishing merry Christmases across the floor.

Interjection: We are.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you. Merry Christmas to you all as well.

So you had money allocated—and I know the Minister of Citizenship is here, and I congratulate him on his new portfolio. Because this is before his time, the by-election, I know he was probably banging on the cabinet table yesterday because the Dalton McGuinty government took money that was allocated for ESL and spent it elsewhere. This is not just Tim Hudak; it's the Auditor General in the 2005 report.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I was talking about the Auditor General's report and the billion dollars in lost revenue and such. So they robbed from the ESL—English as a second language, to try to help people adapt to the workforce—and they spent it elsewhere, caught red-handed with their hands in the cookie jar.

In 2007, People For Education conducted a survey of school boards. The survey reported that there had been a 29% increase since 2000 in the percentage of elementary schools with ESL students, but over the same period, the percentage with ESL teachers declined 23%. Some 150,000 immigrants a year come to this province, talented individuals who want to put their entrepreneurial spirit, their hard work into the economy, to prosper, to do well, pay for their kids and grandkids, provide for a better future, and the McGuinty government robbed from that fund and saw the number of ESL teachers decline by 23%. So you thought you might have seen that maybe one of the first bills of the Legislature would address this issue.

But do you know what? There's those Frito-Lay chips sitting there in the cafeteria that really get on Dalton McGuinty's last nerve. It's a strange obsession with menus. You would have thought maybe the principal, you would have thought the teachers, you would have thought the students, you would have thought the parents would have been the most important person in the school, but do you know who's the most important person in the school? It's the lunch lady. It's the people working in the cafeteria who have such control, I guess, over—well, actually they don't, because it's going to be assumed by the minister's office to determine the level of trans fat, and interestingly, they will set regulations to determine what kinds of snacks are okay on snack days. So I'm looking forward to the minister's first recommendations to decide, if you have pizza, if you can have mozzarella and cheddar or if you just have to decide one or the other. I really hope the Minister of Education does not divide this province along the lines of thin crust versus extra

crust. Heaven forbid we enter into that debate. I'm being a little bit sarcastic, but this is what this bill is about as the priority of the McGuinty government in its first session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is always such a pleasure to respond to the comments made by the member for—Lincoln Erie?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yeah, whatever it is. I told you that if I ever became the Speaker of the House, you'd all be in trouble because I'd say, "Hey, you, it's your turn."

Anyway, it's always a pleasure to comment on his speech, and I thought, "He's right, you know." You look at this bill, and it's very typical of what the government does, sort of the *modus operandi* of the government. It's about a good thing. There's not a member in this House who can say we're not in favour of trying to limit trans fats or get rid of them. There's not a member in this House who disagrees with the idea that in the end we need to make sure that young people have a healthier lifestyle when it comes to eating. God, I can prove that just by opening my jacket. But I've got to say that when you look at the bill, it's pretty toothless. I've got the bill, and if I have the time later, I might get a chance to go through it. It's a voluminous bill. It's got so many pages in it: the front page—oh, it's a page-and-a-half kind of bill. And what does it really do? It only basically gives the government the ability to make regulations in order to get school boards to supposedly limit trans fats, but there are no targets in this bill; there's nothing serious about making sure that in the end we really do something about trans fats.

I remember Gerard Kennedy, the former Minister of Education, saying he was going to move on this. He did a whole bunch of press announcements over the period of a couple of years saying that he was going to tackle this issue and he was going to make sure that our schools were in such a situation where kids would all be eating so healthy. What was done? Gerard Kennedy left the Legislature and nothing happened. Now he's somewhere in Ottawa trying to repeat his successes in the province of Ontario.

I commend the member from Erie—what the heck is the riding?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, it's changed—Niagara West—Flamborough—for his comments, and I look forward to many other comments over the next four years.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to listen to the comments of my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook. He talked about things that people talked to him about at the door during the election. I was at the doors during the election and I learned very quickly that the best thing I could do, among the some 6,000 doors that I made it to, was just stand there in the Toryest of Tory polls in Tory-blue Streetsville and say, "I'm Bob Delaney. I'm running." And they would say—well, most

of it wasn't repeatable. It had to do with this proposal by a leader who isn't present here regarding faith-based schools. All people wanted to talk about was faith-based schools. We would say, "We could get rid of trans fats." "Let's go back to faith-based schools." And when it was all done, they'd say, "There are four votes in this household. Why don't you put your sign up?" And I put my sign up. All those polls that were blue in 2003 were red in 2007.

I personally have a lot of time for the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook. He is indeed an articulate, enthusiastic spokesman for his point of view. In fact, I personally think from my vantage point over here on this side of the House that he would make a terrific party leader.

This bill is really about banning trans fats. Banning trans fats is really important for us in western Mississauga, especially in the five brand new schools that were built on the watch of the first term of our government: two badly needed high schools, three badly needed elementary schools in a growing, prosperous, dynamic area of Mississauga—Streetsville. We have five brand new schools in western Mississauga, all of which will be trans fat-free courtesy of this bill.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to congratulate my colleague the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook for his comments. The one thing he always does when he speaks to any piece of legislation is to make sure that he's got a lot of important points that need to be put on the record.

I heard the last member speak, and I would say to you, I don't think I heard anybody at any door ask me, when I was elected, would I please pass a bill related to trans fats? It wasn't what I heard at the door. I heard at the door from people who said, "You know, Elizabeth, when you were Minister of Education, you had a plan to deal with the funding formula for schools," and that funding formula had been recommended by Dr. Mordechai Rozanski. They said, "What happened to the funding formula? Why, over the period of four years, did the Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty take absolutely no action? And why are they continuing to postpone taking any action? They made a promise and they've broken their promise." That was part of over 50 promises that were broken.

Another promise that was broken was the \$6,000 they were going to give to the people in long-term-care homes for personal care. The other promise they broke was their promise to shut down the coal plants, and it goes on and on and on. That's what I heard about at the doors. I heard a lot about broken promises. I didn't hear about trans fats. I just want you to know that this should have been brought in in the context of making our schools healthier with physical activity.

1730

Mr. Paul Miller: I really find this conversation interesting. The member across the floor mentioned that he's proud of the fact that five schools in his area are now going to be trans fat-free. That's good. I commend the

member, but let's talk about the arenas in his area. Let's talk about the gymnasiums in his area. Let's talk about private clubs in his area. Are they trans fats fat-free? I don't think so.

We tell our kids to go to the hockey rink, work out, play, lose weight, and what do we do when they come out of the dressing room? We go and get chocolate bars out of the arenas. So if we're going to do it, let's do it right. You can have lots of food supplements that aren't full of these trans fats.

But as I repeated yesterday, you have to stop it at the source, and the source is the manufacturers. Since 1901, these trans fats have been put into our foods. You can't just stop it at the vending machine; you've got to stop it at the manufacturer. I don't see anything in this bill that's going to regulate the manufacturers of trans fats. That's where you want to go. You go to the source. You don't go to the end result and close a few vending machines in a high school. That doesn't cut it.

If you're going to do a bill, do it right. Go from the source to the end result. This is not what's happening. This bill is a good start, but it doesn't go anywhere near where they should be going with this. I ask that member across the floor: Does he give out Halloween candies at his house? I bet he does—full of trans fats. But then he says that the kid who goes to high school can't have it, but he'll hand it out at his door on Halloween night. I think what's going on here is a little hypocritical. Either you do the bill right or you don't do it at all.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd just ask the honourable member to consider what he just said at the end there and perhaps withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: I will withdraw the word "hypocritical"; sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Isn't that word allowed here?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'm not too sure.

The member for Niagara West—Glanbrook has two minutes for summation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I appreciate the comments from my colleagues on my comments on Bill 8. I'll stick to my guns on this. I think the average person in Ontario would rather see guns and knives and the kind of rampant school violence we've seen in many schools in Ontario under Dalton McGuinty's watch banned, as opposed to banning Captain Cupcake.

I'd expect that the taxpayers in the Glanbrook and Stoney Creek growth areas want to see investments in new schools or Park school and repairs in Grimsby. Central needs to be rebuilt. Blessed Trinity in Grimsby is the portable capital of all of Niagara. I think they'd rather see the McGuinty government have an emphasis on capital rebuilds and getting students into the schools, aside from portables, but no, they're going to ban Hostess Twinkies as one of their priorities in this new legislative session.

The McGuinty government often likes to talk about the number of jobs they claim they've helped create in

Ontario. In fact, Ontario's record is at the bottom or near the bottom in job creation in all of Canada. But I also want to point out that of the number the Premier usually uses, around 400,000, almost half are actually public sector jobs. We're going to see this increase with this bill when I see the minister is given the power, under section 320, "prescribing the meaning of 'special event day.'" This is going to be some hot discussion at cabinet and caucus, isn't it, if there's a hot dog day, a special event day? Hot dogs are kind of commonplace these days and wouldn't meet the definition of "special." But what about pizza day? Are we going to have the whole debate about double crust or the classic thin-layered pizza?

I also look forward to the number of civil servants hired by the Ministry of Education to help define in each type of food what per cent of trans fat would be appropriate. I just wonder why this is a top priority today of the Dalton McGuinty government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this issue: Bill 8, Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act. Anyone who has tuned in to this, anyone who has read newspaper reports would think that this government was actually going to take action to protect the health of children. But unfortunately, I don't think one can assume that. The fact that this bill has been put forward on the floor and is being debated, the reality that this bill will probably pass and be adopted, doesn't mean that the children, the students, in this province are going to be protected.

In 2004, federal NDP MP Pat Martin put forward a private member's bill calling for the banning of trans fats nationally. He actually took the structure of that bill, the direction of that bill, from legislation that had been adopted in Denmark. A number of years ago, Denmark actually took action nationally, comprehensively, on trans fats, and they have had real impact on their health statistics. They have seen a notable decline in heart disease related to consumption of trans fats. They know that taking substantial action changes health statistics, changes the impact on the health care system, the cost of looking after people. It makes a difference in people's daily lives.

As the member for Scarborough Southwest said earlier, there's no question that when you consume these foods with this industrially processed oil, it coats your arteries, it causes heart disease. Frankly, it makes sense to take action on this particular problem. Unfortunately, I don't think we can rest assured, I don't think we can rest comfortably, that this government will actually deliver the goods.

I should note that my friend Pat Martin brought forward a private member's bill in 2004. His private member's bill did not get enacted in law in 2005. The NDP brought forward a motion repeating the direction of that bill. That was actually passed by a significant majority in the House of Commons. However, Paul Martin, who was the Prime Minister at the time, did not decide to

actually listen to the voice of Parliament, did not decide to actually take the action that Parliament had recommended be taken. He did not bring in legislation that would deal with this health problem.

What we have today is a bill that continues the Liberal approach to policy-making. It's an approach that relies on appeals to industry. It relies on making sure that you look like you're doing something, sound like you're doing something, appear like you're doing something, but in the end you don't ruffle any feathers because you actually don't do much at all, if anything.

I know that you can look around at the respective communications people in the different ministries, and they'll take these announcements, they'll take these bills, they'll weave them all together so that people out there watching this broadcast will think, "Well, finally someone's doing something about this cardiac-system-crippling, heart-disease-inducing health problem." But I would say to you who are watching this, you who are listening to the debate this evening, those of you out there with kids in school concerned about trans fats and wanting to make sure that your children have something healthy to eat: Don't expect that this bill will actually deal with the problem.

I look at some examples of actions, or, more accurately, inactions, taken by this government and governments like it—previous federal Liberal governments. As I said in an earlier comment, in 2005 this Liberal government here on these benches passed an act giving themselves the power to intervene to promote energy efficiency and conservation. They gave themselves the power to actually overrule covenants in housing subdivisions so that people who want to put up clotheslines to dry their clothes without burning fossil fuels or causing nuclear power plants to be running overtime—they gave people the power for that very little energy demand to put up clotheslines. Have they in fact taken the opportunity to use that power and actually make the situation change? Have they actually done what they advertised they were going to do when they brought forward the legislation and had it adopted? The answer simply is no. Anyone who thought they were going to act, anyone who thought that things were going to move forward, would be cruelly disappointed.

1740

Similarly, last summer we heard the Premier speak about climate change, speak about his concern—scientific concern, ethical concern, emotional concern—talking about how he was going to make sure that all his actions would be transparent and accountable, that the Environmental Commissioner would be given the power to assess what he had done, to report back to the Legislature, that he would actually make real things happen. He would take substantial steps to deal with this global problem. We're waiting. We're waiting.

In 2003, the Premier said that he'd shut down all the coal plants in this province by 2007. Midway through the last term, he broke that promise. There are a lot of folks who are well aware that this is a government that governs

on appearance, not on substance. That, unfortunately, is what we're witnessing again with this legislation. This bill says that the minister "may" develop regulations to ban trans fats, but doesn't say "shall" make regulations to ban trans fats. So, two years from now, we may be in the same position as with as the energy efficiency and conservation acts, with nothing actually done. It gives the government power to regulate trans fats in foods sold in school cafeterias, but it doesn't compel the government to actually follow through on the act. It's permissive. The permissive language, coupled with the Premier's remarks the day the legislation was announced, indicates the real level of action that's being taken here.

Rosario Marchese, my colleague from Trinity-Spadina, went to the announcement that the Premier made. He thought, "Surely, if the Premier is going to a school making an announcement about healthy school foods, talking about junk food, trans fats, this is going to be substantive, this is going to be real, this is going to move things in this province." What did the member from Trinity-Spadina find? When he spoke in this Legislature, he recounted what had actually happened at that press conference. The Premier said, "We're getting rid of junk food in our schools." He was asked by a journalist, "What are you really getting rid of?" The Premier's reply: "Well, we're not getting rid of anything. We're simply going to consult with the manufacturers."

There you are. We're going to have a long consultation. We will have a series of headlines every so often: a big headline, a little commentary story buried on page 10, then another headline. Then maybe an editorial, maybe an opinion piece. All kinds of opportunities, but in the end, will substantial change happen? In the end, will our kids actually have less exposure to junk food? Will trans fats be moved on? No. Who knows? Lightning may strike; we shouldn't rule out the unusual. Someone on these benches may win the lottery and move on. Stranger things have happened.

But what the Premier has done with his announcement and what we're doing with this bill is just another symptom of that Liberal syndrome: announcement, re-announcement, announcement of that previous announcement. It goes on and on.

I can see that the new member from Hamilton Mountain is disturbed by my comments. She's saddened by an apparent cynicism on the part of one of her new colleagues. She came here with hope. Truly, that's clear, isn't it, member? She came with hope, and yet the bills are presented and there is nothing but distrust on the part of us in the opposition. Because in fact we've gone through this before too many times—too many times. It goes on.

Now, in the past Gerard Kennedy was Minister of Education—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's encouraging to me that I'm being heard by people on the Liberal benches. They've stopped reading their papers.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But can he beat Bob Rae?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have no idea. I have no idea about the suggestions from the member from Welland, but I do know this: Gerard Kennedy said junk food was gone.

There was a great quote, actually, that my friend Rosario Marchese brought forward. I really enjoyed it so I have to read it all to you, because I think your night will be more complete if you hear it. He was quoting from the Thunder Bay Chronicle, and he had Gerard Kennedy saying—school boards were told that “if they have contracts with pop and junk food companies to sell their products in elementary schools, cancel them.” That’s pretty straightforward, eh? My God, strong action, strong words; at last, someone on the move, a province having its problems dealt with.

Well, it’s almost 2008, and just a week ago our critic for education, the member for Trinity–Spadina, was at the school where the Premier was talking about junk food. Strangely enough—I know it’s shocking; maybe you don’t believe me; others would—he found junk food in vending machines. It was a brutal experience for that member. He is still suffering the scars from that experience.

Mr. Peter Kormos: He may never recover.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: He may never recover. It’s a very, very grim situation.

What he had to say—and I think he’s quite correct—is that this is driven by the financial crisis in the schools. Never forget that. We went through big debates in the election. I know before the election the Premier and the Minister of Education were talking about how, “We have fixed the funding formula,” or “We are about to fix the funding formula.” But when I talk to trustees here in Toronto, they have deep financial problems. They’re looking at big crunches in the budget year to come. Not just here but all over Ontario, school boards are trying to balance their budgets by having contracts with vending companies. They’re trying to work whatever deal they can to keep the doors open.

In my neighbourhood, Toronto–Danforth, we have a problem with junk food but we also have a problem with the fact that the financial crunch means that young people—children—can’t access the school facilities unless they have money to pay, and they don’t. So instead of spending evenings playing volleyball, basketball or floor hockey in their schools, they’re just hanging out. It doesn’t make sense, if you care about the health of our young people, to starve the education system for funds and to leave facilities unused, empty, when in fact students need to use them.

The new member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek was right. Having a complete range of activities, having access to sports, to facilities, to coaches, to the facilities that we’ve already paid for that are sitting there locked, that we can’t utilize—it means that our youth, our children, our young people, who are not going to be protected from trans fats by this bill, are also not going to get the opportunity to develop themselves physically, not

going to get the opportunity to actually deal with the development of healthy bodies.

The other night, my colleague from Nickel Belt, new member France Gélinas, had an opportunity to speak to this bill. It was her maiden speech and, I have to say, she’s pretty good. I liked her remarks in Hansard. I liked watching her on television. I think she’s going to make a big difference here. She showed in her comments on this bill exactly that astute approach to health issues that we need around here. She realizes that there’s the larger context that we’re dealing with when we talk about healthy foods, healthy children. She said, “This bill certainly would lead one to believe that great changes are about to come.”

I’ve addressed that earlier, as have a number of my colleagues. We all recognize that the obesity epidemic within our youth and our children is something that needs action, but when the Liberals link a bill that has so little in it to an issue that is so important, it lets the people of Ontario down. Really, all the bill is doing is that they now have the power to set a target for the content of trans fats, and that’s it. That’s all. Will they actually take action? Will they, in fact, set that target? Will they, in fact, clear trans fats out of the schools? One would expect that the Gerard Kennedy experience of speaking big and doing little will revisit itself upon this Legislature and on this province.

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When the new member from Nickel Belt spoke, she talked about what are called the determinants of health, and for those of you who have dealt with that jargon before, you know what I’m talking about. But for a lot of folks, there isn’t that common realization that if you want healthy people, people have to have a good job, a secure source of income; they have to have good homes; they have to have physical activity; they have to have good food. They have to have a range of things that, in the end, set the foundation for good health.

The member from Nickel Belt put it down very clearly. This government is dealing with, here and there, some high points that will catch public attention, but it’s not building that foundation that you really need for health. Even the high points you only get the headlines from, not real action. We know that if we don’t deal with childhood obesity, we’re setting the stage both for poor health for individuals—which can be tragic, can be deadly for those individuals—and also for very large, very difficult to manage health care bills in the years to come.

When you listen to the Minister of Health, you don’t get a sense of his understanding that you have to address all of those determinants of health if you want to have a healthy population and you want to contain the health care budget, the health care expenses in this province.

He was talking about health promotion strategies and the need to deal with this obesity problem. Here’s a quote from the Minister of Health—oh, actually, this is the Minister of Health Promotion. November 12, Toronto Star: “Stopping the soaring obesity rate behind a

worsening diabetes epidemic in this province may take a social engineering effort on the scale of anti-smoking campaigns that cracked the tobacco habit for millions, experts on the disease say.”

Well, you know what? That's right. You need comprehensive, thoroughgoing, solid legislation that is backed by enforcement and political will to actually make a difference in people's day-to-day lives. Unfortunately, that's not what we see from this government.

Health Minister George Smitherman talked about the need to focus on treating the ailment, saying that in fact the prevention of the disease, the prevention of the problem, is going to have to compete with treatment. In a very limited way he may be right, but in terms of the broader vision of how to make sure that people are healthy in this province and that this province is in good shape, his limited vision is highly problematic. It's as if the minister were saying, “You know what? Vaccinating against diseases is something we'll deal with later. We're too busy treating people who are sick.” Well, you have to treat the people who are sick, but you can't set aside, you can't forget about, you can't downgrade the actual preventive step. If you do that, you will be overwhelmed by costs; you will be overwhelmed by misery; you will be overwhelmed by the demand on a health care system that cannot handle the problem. Increasingly, we're facing that problem with the obesity epidemic, the growing diabetes epidemic.

If we're going to deal with that, it's not just a question of spending money on health care. It's a question of taking concrete action in the schools; it's a question of making sure we have sports facilities and access to sports facilities; it's a question of dealing with urban sprawl so that people are able to walk, able to take transit, and are not car-dependent. If the government is serious about making sure that our young people are healthy, they need to deal with this problem comprehensively.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you to the honourable member. Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This bill, as I said before, is interesting in that it's hardly needed anymore. Trans fats are being well recognized. There are lots of things going on in Ontario, especially in the realm of education, that need attention. The safety of our schools is something that is paramount. Students in our schools are losing their lives. They're getting beaten up. They're being bullied. Our schools, which were a haven of safety in the past, are no longer such. They are places where people fear to tread. Teachers can be afraid. Teachers are afraid.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That is not true.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It is true. You talk to teachers who are afraid to go into their classrooms in some sections of this city, and if you don't understand that, you're burying your head in the sand. Minister of Education, I say to you with respect, you should talk to these people and listen to the fear that they have of the students and the goings-on in their schools. Look at the students who are getting beaten up in school these days. Look at the bullying that's taking place. Those are far more important issues in Ontario today than the trans fat issue.

We've come back in a four-day, two-week session to deal with this fluff, which is going to provide a photo opportunity for the minister, with respect. It's not the kind of thing that Ontarians expect from their government.

Aside from that, I would like to wish all the members of the House the merriest of Christmases and a very happy and prosperous new year.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments? Response? No? Further debate? The honourable member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a new riding name change. They're all getting to know the new riding, from the old Victoria-Haliburton, then Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, and now it's Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

What we are debating here: The member from Toronto-Danforth made some very good points and the member from Halton did too. We all want to protect our children. The banning of trans fats has been going on for a long time. Is this fluff or is it something that's similar to the former Minister of Education who brought in all this banning, and yet we have pictures where they were still selling junk food in the schools? We have pictures of that.

The people of Ontario want to know—and the member from Halton said that. We're in the Legislature for just a short period of time. There are a lot of issues facing Ontarians, and we're dealing with a bill banning trans fats. That's important, but is this the first priority for the government? I don't think it should be. I think there needs to be education. The Minister of Education is bringing in the bill, but there are other education issues.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Careful. She's a little sensitive on this subject.

Ms. Laurie Scott: There is some sensitivity. It's Christmastime. We can all get along.

We should be educating our young people how to eat properly. Have we neglected that in the past? We have. I heard some of the members say, “We wish we had this when we were younger and that we had more education.”

The member from Toronto-Danforth in his comments did bring up the chronic diseases that we have, not addressing those properly. That is a huge burden on our health care system. It's not protecting our people, the people of Ontario, and we're not training the young people.

This bill is important. It shouldn't be a major priority for the government.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Just hold on. Sorry, I'm not quite finished. I'm looking for a clock to see how much time there actually is.

Applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, you're not getting away that easily, but thank you. I'm still looking for the answer to my “goo” question from earlier today in question period. Somehow we didn't get an answer to that but it is tied into education, because it was a math question, Mr. Speaker, as you're looking.

I wish everyone in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—the new riding name—a very merry Christmas. I don't know where the clock is. A very merry Christmas to all in the Legislature and to the people of Ontario.

I see the Speaker rising to inform me that—

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member. I want to express season's greetings and a merry Christmas to everyone too and thank you for your co-operation today, my second day in the chair.

It being 6 o'clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 2008.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 17 March 2008

Lundi 17 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 17 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 17 mars 2008

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CURLING TEAMS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members' statements. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back, everyone.

I wanted to make a statement today on some really great people, and that is the curling teams of Sherry Middaugh, the Ontario women's curling champion, and the men's curling champion from Ontario, Glenn Howard's team of Richard Hart, Brent Laing and Craig Savill. As many of you sports fans might have known, Glenn just barely lost the Canadian title last night. Both he and Sherry are from my riding, and they both curl out of the Coldwater and District Curling Club.

But what is really important about this statement today is the kind of people that Glenn and Sherry and their teammates are. I want to tell you about two things in particular, one being a couple of fundraising events they've had this year. Sherry took part in a major fundraiser earlier in the month. At the Coldwater curling club, Curl for the Cure raised over \$25,000 on a four-sheet ice surface in one day, and Sherry lent her name to that. As well, both Sherry and Wayne Middaugh and their teammates, and Glenn Howard, have a project each year that they work on for the Huronia Hospitals Foundation called Curl with the Pros. This year, they raised about \$16,000 towards the Huronia Hospitals Foundation fundraising campaign.

I want to congratulate them on a great season, but more importantly, I want to congratulate them on the great people they are for our community.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, I'm just—go around.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Newmarket-Aurora.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm calling on the Minister of Health to ensure that residents in long-term-care homes in Aurora, in Newmarket and around this province

receive the quality of care that they deserve. He can do that by prioritizing our seniors and people with disabilities who are residents of long-term-care homes in his government's upcoming budget.

At a recent round-table discussion at the Aurora Resthaven long-term-care home, I heard from residents, family members and staff that the services and quality of care that can be provided at current funding levels are unacceptable. Edith Schultz, Resthaven's administrator, pointed out that cost increases have outstripped funding increases for four straight years.

I was presented with thousands of postcards, gathered at a number of long-term-care homes, including Southlake Village in Newmarket, the Willows in Aurora, and the King City Lodge. I will be sending them across to the minister. They are signed by residents, their families and staff, and ask that the government provide the \$513 million of additional funding to provide the additional staff and supplies necessary to ensure an adequate level of care and quality of life for residents. That is \$18.75 for each of the residents of long-term-care homes in our province.

We will be interested to see where our long-term-care residents are on this government's list of priorities when the Minister of Finance tables his budget.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise in the House today to speak about the McGuinty government's success when it comes to recognizing the importance of renewable energy. It is a key component to build a cleaner, sustainable energy future for Ontario. Thanks to this government's concern for the environment, Ontario is now a leader for wind power in Canada. We are building a clean and green energy future that supports a healthy electricity system and a healthy environment. We are on track to double the amount of energy we generate from renewables within the next 20 years. The McGuinty government knows that investing in renewables benefits the environment and the economy. Our government's energy program includes a culture of conservation. We will continue down the path to a cleaner environment while ensuring that the lights stay on.

Protecting our environment is a chief concern for the people of Mississauga South. On February 27 of this year, Mississauga city council voted unanimously to oppose the construction of a new gas-fired plant in Lakeview and to redevelop this waterfront site. The residents of Lakeview and Mississauga South have served our

province for nearly 40 years by hosting a dirty coal plant. This resolution is an important step towards the goal of protecting and revitalizing Mississauga's lakefront.

I extend my congratulations to the residents and to council on this historic decision and to the McGuinty government for its landmark renewable energy plan.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: An Ode for Ontario:

I rise today to speak in verse
Of a new, imposed provincial curse
So excuse me if my words are terse
But the situation's getting worse.

In this, the former industrial core
Where once we heard a mighty roar
Echoing from the factory floor
Silence looms; they work no more.

Hundreds of thousands of jobs disappear
And the Premier says, "There's nothing to fear."
"Simply find a new career
"In the business or the service sphere.

"Now you may have to move away
"Go back to school by night or day
"And take a hefty cut in pay
"But otherwise, you'll be okay."

And as workers despair, investors leave
With little reason to hope or believe
That the Liberal government will ever achieve
Any kind of fiscal reprieve.

Economists, you know they back us
In our plan to sever taxes
But the Premier and his crew relaxes
They'd rather grind partisan axes.

The economy has run amok
And the worker is the sitting duck.
But who's to blame for such bad luck?
The Premier? No, he'll pass the buck.

"Blame Ottawa, blame Flaherty,
"Blame China's new economy,
"Blame western Canada," says he.
"Blame anyone, but don't blame me!"

PESTICIDES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my turn this time, so thank you for recognizing me.

Originally from the city of Timmins but now Ottawa, Joel Theriault has travelled all the way from Ottawa to

bring petitions here to the Legislature that I will be presenting a little bit later. They have to do with the banning of pesticides and herbicides used on people's lawns. The petition is fairly substantial. We've got signatures from people from across Ontario; I believe there are some 2,000-plus signatures. So I first of all want to say to Joel: a job well done. That's what we call democracy in action.

1340

The issue here is a very simple one. There are better ways to control what is on the lawns that people don't want. You don't necessarily have to have herbicides to deal with it. There are natural products that could be used. In fact, if you take a look at the province of Quebec, we all know that the province of Quebec has been way ahead of Ontario and way ahead of the rest of Canada when it comes to dealing with this type of situation by way of legislation.

As I said, later on this afternoon I'll be tabling this petition on behalf of Joel. I would like to acknowledge Joel, who is in the gallery today, if he wants to stand up. If members want to take the time to go and talk to him, please do so. He has a lot to tell you and would appreciate your support.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. Reza Moridi: In 1999, initiated by a Canadian organization called Mother Language Lovers of the World and supported by the government of Bangladesh, UNESCO proclaimed February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

This day aims at promoting linguistic diversity, multilingual education and awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

There are about 7,000 languages spoken in the world. It is estimated that within a few generations more than 50% of these languages may disappear.

Ontario is proud to be home to people from 200 different ethnic origins who speak more than 150 different languages. Every group is making contributions to the cultural and economic development of Ontario. Here in Ontario, diversity is our strength. Diversity contributes to our competitive advantage in the global economy.

The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2008 as the International Year of Language. This is a great year and a great place to celebrate linguistic diversity and multilingualism.

Dhonno Baad. Sagolun. Mamnoon. Do jeh. Dan-yabad. Shukriya. Shie Shie. Arigato. Grazie. Danke. Merci. Thank you.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Our government knows that students with the highest level of education have the best chance to succeed. That's why we're investing in

more opportunities, more assistance and greater quality for post-secondary institutions.

Under the \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan, the McGuinty government has invested in more opportunities, more assistance and greater quality. In fact, this is the largest multi-year investment in post-secondary education and enhanced skills training in 40 years.

The Reaching Higher plan has been a success for students in Ontario. As an educator and administrator, I have seen first-hand the successes in the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, in the three townships of Woolwich, Wilmot and Wellesley and in the two universities, Wilfrid Laurier University and Waterloo. Record numbers of students are finding opportunities in the province's colleges and universities: 100,000 more since the McGuinty government started in 2003—a 25% increase.

Where the previous Conservative government cut funding from colleges and universities, the McGuinty Liberals increased funding to \$4.2 billion in 2007-08. This is proof positive that the McGuinty government's Reaching Higher plan is helping our students not only to succeed but to excel.

LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to speak to what the McGuinty government is doing to support low-income families in Ontario. It's no secret that in order to have a strong economy it is critical that everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Just today, our government announced an investment of \$135 million over three years in a dental plan for low-income families, providing prevention and treatment services through public health units and community health centres. We will double our investment in the student nutrition program with \$32 million over three years. This allows for an expansion of existing programs that currently provide healthy snacks and meals to over 400,000 kids across Ontario. Now we can reach even more than that.

We will invest \$100 million to assist with repairs to 4,000 affordable housing units. Further, Ontario municipalities will also now be able to get up to \$500 million in low-cost loans from the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority to repair affordable housing. These investments complement others that this government has made in terms of continually increasing the minimum wage and in introducing the Ontario child benefit.

The keyword here is "invest." This government invests in Ontarians because it is Ontarians who will keep our province and its economy strong into the 21st century.

NEXT GENERATION OF JOBS FUND

Mr. Bruce Crozier: It's with pleasure that I rise in the House today to highlight the government's exciting Next Generation of Jobs Fund, an initiative that will

propel the Ontario economy forward. The fund is a five-year, \$1.15-billion strategy that will help innovative companies grow and create well-paying, sustainable jobs for today's workforce and for the next generation of Ontario's highly skilled workers. The fact is that the world needs green products, efficient technologies, health cures and treatments. Ontario has the strengths in these areas, and we can and we will create jobs right here in Ontario. The Next Generation of Jobs Fund will help do this.

For a company to receive funding from this fund, they must be able to demonstrate that their company will:

- secure good jobs for Ontarians;
- use or develop innovative technologies, processes and/or materials;
- help establish Ontario as a global leader in an emerging market;
- build on their existing Ontario base or create new expertise and research in commercialization;
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions in target sectors; and
- create synergies among researchers, business people and entrepreneurs.

Ontario's Next Generation of Jobs Fund will fund companies that make everything from car parts to advanced health products to Academy Award-winning special effects technologies. As the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has said, we are "sending the message to companies around the world that if you've got a product that will grow your business and"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's my pleasure to note in attendance today Bruce Hefler, Ana Szado and Luke Hefler, the family of a new page, Ela Hefler. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

VISITOR

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the members' attention to the east members' gallery. There's a young lady there; her name is Leah Jefferson, a third-year political science major from the University of Akron, Ohio. She is here as part of the Legislative Assembly intern program.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a copy of an order in council appointing the following members as commissioners to the Board of Internal Economy:

- the Speaker, who shall be Chair;
- the Honourable Christopher Bentley, the Honourable Brad Duguid, the Honourable Monique Smith,

appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council from among the members of the executive council;

—Wayne Arthurs, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the government;

—Robert Runciman, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the official opposition;

—Gilles Bisson, MPP, appointed by the caucus of the New Democratic Party.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following reports were tabled:

—on January 21, 2008, the 2007 annual report of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth;

—on January 21, 2008, the Office of Child and Family Service Advocacy report entitled *We are your Sons and Daughters: The Child Advocate's Report on the Quality of Care of Three Children's Aid Societies*;

—on February 14, 2008, the Integrity Commissioner report pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, concerning the request of the member for Welland regarding the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, Michael A. Brown;

—on February 26, 2008, the Ombudsman Ontario report entitled *A Test of Wills: Investigation into Legal Aid Ontario's Role in the Funding of the Criminal Defence of Richard Wills*.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Pat Hoy: I beg leave to present a report on the pre-budget consultation 2008 from the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Pat Hoy: I would simply move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr. Hoy moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hoy has moved adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing to be counted.

All those opposed will please rise.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 63; the nays are 32.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on Hydro One Inc.'s—acquisition of goods and services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: As Chairman of the public accounts committee of this Legislature, it's my privilege to table reports of the committee. The four reports I'm tabling today refer to work done by the committee prior to the provincial election in October. The committee considers parts of the Auditor General's annual report, asks for reports from ministries regarding what they are doing to improve on what the Auditor General observed, and criticizes and makes recommendations. The committee has great confidence in and works well with our present Auditor General, James McCarter. These four reports refer to sections of the Auditor General's 2006 report.

The committee has worked in a constructive and co-operative fashion over the past four years. We have been greatly assisted by two excellent, long-serving researchers, Elaine Campbell and Ray McLellan. They are now serving in other capacities in this Legislature, and on behalf of the public accounts committee I want to thank them for their past excellent work.

1400

I would be remiss in not recognizing two former MPPs, members of provincial Parliament, who served on the committee for long periods of time in their parliamentary careers. They are Shelley Martel of the New Democratic Party from Nickel Belt and Richard Patten from the Liberal Party from Ottawa Centre. Both of these individuals worked very hard and carried out their duties with integrity and diligence. As a result, I know that the citizens of Ontario have benefited from their participation greatly, and I want to thank them.

This report of the committee makes recommendations on how to improve the procurement policies and practices of Hydro One and asks them to report back to the committee on their progress.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on the Ontario Realty Corp.'s real estate and

accommodation services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This second report of the public accounts committee deals with the Ontario Realty Corp.'s real estate and accommodation services. The Auditor General wanted to be certain that the public's interests were being protected when properties were being leased or sold. The committee made five recommendations to improve the accountability, as well as drawing attention to the need to recognize the significance of the community in the disposition process.

I move adjournment of this debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on community colleges' acquisition of goods and services from the standing committee on public accounts, and I move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Sterling moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I have more.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. The member for a brief statement.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief, but not that brief.

This third report I'm introducing assesses the purchasing policies of community colleges. The committee was generally satisfied that the community colleges were responding positively and meeting the deficiencies outlined by the Auditor General's report of 2006, and the committee believes that the community colleges are on the right track to improving their procurement policies.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on school boards and their practices regarding the acquisition of goods and services from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This last report of the public accounts committee deals with the acquisition of goods and services by both public and Catholic school

boards, all 72 of them. This was the first time the Auditor General had undertaken a value-for-money audit under his now wider jurisdiction to look at school boards. He recognized that there were wide discrepancies in how money was being spent and accounted for in the use of purchasing cards by school boards.

As Chair of the public accounts committee, I contacted and corresponded with the director and chair of each of the 72 district school boards in our province, asking them to post on their websites four relevant policies to deal with expenditure controls. As a result, as of July last year, 56 of the 72 boards had complied. We look forward to all 72 boards complying, and the public accounts committee will be asking them to do so.

I move adjournment of this debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the supplementary estimates 2007-08 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of Transportation before the standing committee on estimates are reported back to the House as they were not selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed adopted.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to take this opportunity to recognize Virginia MacLeod. Virginia is the mother of Lisa MacLeod and she is here for the first time, visiting from Nova Scotia. Welcome, Mrs. MacLeod.

VISITORS

Hon. George Smitherman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I thought that members might wish to join with me in congratulating Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh Tilley, who has been serving the Salvation Army since 1952 and at this Legislature often for about 11 or 12 years. He'll soon be retiring and giving way to Captain Brenda Murray, who joins us as well in the east members' gallery.

BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I know all members of the Legislature would want to join me in congratulating the Brock Badgers,

who won the Canadian university men's basketball championship in Ottawa this weekend by defeating the Acadia Axemen by a score of 64 to 61.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CANADIAN MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN CANADIENS

Mr. Bisson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to promote the purchase of Canadian mass transit vehicles / Projet de loi 31, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun canadiens.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This bill sets out requirements for municipalities and regional transit authorities when purchasing mass transit vehicles with funds received from the province. Municipalities and regional transit authorities must give preference to mass transit vehicles whose final assembly is done in Ontario and where at least 50% of the total dollar value of the contract to purchase these vehicles is attributed to parts and labour originating in Canada. Et je demande aux députés de lire ce projet de loi et de nous donner ce support jeudi, quand ça vient au débat.

WASTE DISPOSAL SITE 41 IN THE TOWNSHIP OF TINY ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE LIEU 41 D'ÉLIMINATION DE DÉCHETS DANS LE CANTON DE TINY

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to prevent the disposal of waste at Site 41 in the Township of Tiny / Projet de loi 32, Loi visant à empêcher l'élimination de déchets sur le lieu 41 dans le canton de Tiny.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

First reading agreed to.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My private member's bill, Waste Disposal Site 41 in the Township of Tiny Act, parallels Bill 49, the Adams Mine Lake Act, that this House passed in the previous Parliament. The horrible tragedy at Walkerton and the recommendations of Justice Dennis O'Connor from the Walkerton inquiry should have taught all Ontarians and the Minister of the Environment lessons that we cannot ignore. I would appreciate the support of all members of this House as this bill proceeds.

1410

CHILDREN'S LAW REFORM AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI PORTANT RÉFORME DU DROIT DE L'ENFANCE

Mr. Craitor moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 33, An Act to amend the Children's Law Reform Act / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for a short statement.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Shortly after I was elected as a provincial member of Parliament for the riding of Niagara Falls in 2003, I was approached by a number of grandparents at my office. These were grandparents who were concerned, who were caring and who had difficulty in securing legal access through the courts to their grandchildren. Since then, I've received over 2,000 e-mails, 4,000 petitions and hundreds of letters and personal contacts with loving grandparents who find themselves in this tragic situation.

I'm pleased to introduce for the third time—and perhaps lucky for the third time—a bill that would give recognition to the rights of grandparents, where, in the opinion of the courts, it would be in the best interests of the child to ensure they have access to visit their grandparents. My proposed legislation, if passed, will amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their grandparents.

MADE IN ONTARIO ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR L'IDENTIFICATION DES PRODUITS FAITS EN ONTARIO

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to require merchandise that is manufactured in Ontario to be identified as such / Projet de loi 34, Loi exigeant que les marchandises fabriquées en Ontario soient identifiées comme telles.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member for a short statement.

Mr. Dave Levac: This bill requires retailers to identify merchandise that is manufactured in Ontario. Its purpose will be to allow the showcasing of our high-quality made-in-Ontario goods and help identify and possibly encourage consumers to purchase Ontario-manufactured products in retail stores across the province. This bill could contribute to the growth of consumer loyalty

towards Ontario-manufactured products and strengthen our manufacturing industry.

I can only say that we can never have too much promotion of Ontario-manufactured goods. We have had many successes such as Foodland Ontario and the Ontario domestic wine industry.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Bryant: Speaker, I'm seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list of private members' public business:

Mr. Hardeman and Mr. Yakabuski exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Hardeman assumes ballot item 37 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item 17; Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Mauro exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Ramsay assumes ballot item 65 and Mr. Mauro assumes ballot item 9; Ms. Aggelonitis and Ms. Broten exchange places in order of precedence such that Ms. Aggelonitis assumes ballot item 12 and Ms. Broten assumes ballot item 5; and that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 5 through 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader moves that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes as proposed to the ballot list of private members' public business be approved.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Before we proceed with question period, I would like to briefly say a few words about the conduct of business in the House. During the December sitting period, I had the opportunity to scrutinize proceedings perhaps more carefully than I have in the past, and from a more central vantage point. I observed at least occasional confusion about some of our proceedings, and I thought it would help to clarify those from time to time.

Question period provides an opportunity for all members of the Legislature to ask questions on matters of government policy. It is a time-honoured procedure used in Parliament to allow the legislative branch to hold the executive to account. I would ask that members keep this in mind when their colleagues are answering and asking questions, and afford them the respect that they and we all deserve. The use of moderate language and limited interjections is advised. If I can't hear the question or the

answer, it is quite likely that you can't either. That means that it is too noisy in this place and I will find it necessary to interrupt and restore order.

While I know that it is not a practice that comes naturally to most of us, speaking in the third person can go a long way in improving the atmosphere in here. If honourable members speak through the Chair rather than directly to each other, it has the effect of reducing the likelihood of personal attacks during heated exchanges. Finger pointing and direct confrontational language never fail to diminish the dignity of this chamber.

In keeping with the practice established by Speakers before me, I will be mindful of the clock, specifically the time taken up with each individual question and answer. When 10 seconds remain in the allocated time, I will call for the question or the answer to be completed, as the case may be. This should not be seen as an opportunity to turn away from the Chair in an attempt to eke out extra time, but rather as a warning that it is time to wrap up.

With respect to the introduction of bills, I believe there may be some misconception about what is permitted in the statement that can be made to coincide with that proceeding. At the introduction and first reading stage, the sponsor of the bill is permitted to make a brief statement of purpose. This is a statement that indicates what the bill is to do. It does not go into further explanation about why it is being introduced, the impact it will potentially have, or how the party across the way should have introduced it themselves. The bill is being presented to the House for the first time, and, as a courtesy, the sponsor is identifying its purpose. It is not intended to be debate; it is intended to be brief. It seems to me that, in general purpose, most bills can be easily explained in 30 seconds or less. Anything more than that is likely better suited to a member's statement or the eventual debate of the bill itself.

These are but two areas in which I believe there is room for improved performance in this place. I hope that all honourable members will continue to keep the principles of accepted parliamentary conduct in mind as we carry out the business of this House over the spring sitting.

I'd just remind the members that often we have grade 5 students who like to visit Queen's Park and remember the wonderful things that we all try to teach students in school, so keep that in the back of your mind as well as you are answering or asking that question: How we act in here is what they take back to their classrooms.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: A happy St. Paddy's day to all. My question is for the Premier. Premier, Ontario was once the economic engine of this country, but under your government it has become one of the slowest-grow-

ing provinces in Canada, with reported growth below the national average since 2005 and the longest string of underperformance in 30 years. Don Drummond of the TD Bank, who I believe was an adviser to your government in the past, has said that the current tax levels in Ontario stick out like a sore thumb—his words—compared to the rest of Canada. But it doesn't have to be this way. Ontario has options. It has a chance with the upcoming budget to start to repair the damage done over the last four years.

Will you, Premier, commit today to reducing the marginal tax rate on new business investment to bring it in line with other provinces like Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C. and Quebec?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. I've been looking forward to this opportunity for us to discuss at some length the different philosophy embraced by the Conservative Party, apparently endorsed by the federal government of the day.

We believe it takes more than just cuts to business taxes in order to ensure that we grow our economy at the beginning of the 21st century in a knowledge-based, globalized economy. That's why, in addition to cutting business taxes—and the member opposite knows that we have recently eliminated capital taxes for manufacturers in the forestry sector, for example—we're also investing heavily in infrastructure. We're supporting innovation. We're investing heavily in the development of the skills and education of our people. We also believe in entering into strategic partnerships with business to help them grow stronger. That, to my way of thinking, constitutes an intelligent, thoughtful plan to grow the economy.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The federal Minister of Finance's concerns are real; he's genuinely concerned about this once-great province slipping into have-not status under your leadership. The capital tax should be gone today, and it would have been if this government hadn't abandoned the plans put in place by the previous Progressive Conservative government. Under the Liberals, this tax will remain in place for the next two years. That's a clear example of why, after almost five years of Liberal inaction, Ontario now finds itself almost dead last in the country for economic growth. The government's on the wrong track. Ontario's going one way and the rest of Canada in another.

Premier, will the upcoming budget correct your government's mistakes and eliminate the capital tax for all business immediately?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think it would be helpful to all of us to cast our minds back to the consequences of a dangerous and reckless obsession with tax cuts. Again, that was embraced by the Conservatives when they were in government. They left us with a \$5.6-billion deficit. They closed our hospitals. They declared war on public education. They fired nurses by the thousands. They fired water inspectors.

We're not going to pursue that particular path. Ontarians have said no to that particular approach. We are

investing in our schools. We are investing in the skills and education of our people. We are investing in our health care system. We are investing in infrastructure. We are investing in partnerships with the business community. That, again, to my way of thinking at the beginning of the 21st century, is how to grow the Ontario economy.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The former government created over a million new jobs in this province and took hundreds of thousands of people off of welfare. We want to compare your government to another—I think it's more analogous to the Bob Rae government going down the same path. What this government doesn't understand is that they're sacrificing short-term gain for long-term pain. Slower economic growth means less money to fund the very programs you're talking about protecting. In order to prevent a decline in program funding, the government must act to reduce levels of taxation. Rather than throwing a few lifelines to select companies, making corporate and small business tax rates competitive keeps all businesses afloat. That's the best way to protect health, education and social program funding.

Premier, is your government going to get us back on track by eliminating the capital tax for all business and reducing the overall tax burden for all business in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't recall the Conservatives campaigning on this particular platform. They're obviously taking their leadership cues from elsewhere these days.

The Conservatives don't like to be reminded of this, but the fact of the matter is that when they embraced that dangerous and reckless obsession with tax cuts—and it has some simplicity to it, and a certain degree of elegance: Tax cuts create jobs. But what the Conservatives didn't tell us was that tax cuts resulted in closed hospitals; resulted in poor-quality health care for the people of Ontario; it resulted in a tax to our system of public education; it resulted in a loss of our capacity to monitor the safety of our environment and it resulted in a \$5.6-billion deficit. During the last four years-plus, we have 450,000 net new jobs in the province of Ontario as a result of our economic policy. We intend to keep moving forward.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: To the Premier again—and it's clear that the Premier is operating the Ontario economy on a failed ideology and a wing and a prayer, and he wants to get rid of the prayer.

Last year, for the first time since the 1991 recession, Ontario's economic growth was the slowest in Canada. All five major banks rank Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces for economic growth this year. Private sector job growth is the slowest in Canada.

Premier, how many more statistics are needed to convince you that your wrong-track economic policies over the last five and a half years simply aren't working?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me speak to a very specific case. In Belleville just a couple of weeks ago—I was there with the Minister of Agriculture and we had the opportunity to attend the official opening of a new Kellogg's plant. It's the first one located in North America in the past 20 years. I spoke with the gentleman there and I said, "Why did you choose Belleville? Why did you choose Ontario?" He said there were three things in particular: (1) because of the quality of our agricultural products; (2) because of the quality of our workforce, the skilled labour; and (3) because we came to the table prepared to compete with US governors, Republican and Democrat alike, with \$9.7 million by way of a five-year, interest-free loan.

The quality of our workforce, the quality of our agricultural product and the fact that we have a government that is prepared to partner with business when it makes sense to do so: That's the reason Kellogg's came to Ontario; that's the reason we have 100 more jobs there today; that's the reason I have confidence in the Ontario economy.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think the old saying "More nerve than a canal horse" applies to that response.

Clearly, the statistics I cited earlier weren't enough. I'll give you some more. Disposable incomes in Ontario are among the slowest-growing in the country and this year will again trail the national average. The number of single people on welfare is almost 103,000. That's an 11% increase since September 2003. Since January 2005, we've lost over 180,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs; last year alone, it was 64,000.

The path to redemption, the road to rebuilding, is clear: Lower taxes, cut red tape, secure an affordable, reliable energy supply and you will turn the economy around. Why do you persist in ignoring the obvious?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just don't and I can't share the negative, pessimistic outlook of the opposition. As a result of our auto sector strategy, we landed \$7 billion in new investment in Ontario and over 7,000 jobs. Our advanced manufacturing strategy, by putting forward \$500 million—I think we've used up some \$180 million of that so far—has landed over \$800 million in new investments, and we have some 3,800 new jobs to speak of. Again, when it comes to the forestry sector, we put over \$1 billion in place as a strategy to work through this time of global competition and low prices.

What the leader of the official opposition refuses to acknowledge is that when he's talking about cutting taxes, he's also saying, "Let's cut services that people have to be able to count on." I am not prepared to close hospitals; I am not prepared to cut funding for our textbooks; I am not prepared to cut jobs in the province of Ontario, including those of the people who happen to inspect our water supply.

1430

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The "Don't worry, be happy" riff is growing a little tiresome. In fact, in some communities it's downright offensive; those communities have lost thousands and hundreds of manufacturing jobs.

The Premier is sticking his head in the sand. In 2007, Ontario reported a net loss of over 36,000 people to other provinces, almost 15,000 in the third quarter alone. That's the biggest out-migration in the province's history, yet he's over there singing, "Don't worry, be happy."

For the first time in 30 years, our unemployment rate exceeded the national average. According again to Mr. Drummond, your friend at TD Bank, Ontario's subpar economic performance brings us closer to being federal-handout status; in other words, a have-not province.

Premier, how much further are we going to slide? How much longer are you going to keep us on the wrong track before you start to show some leadership with respect to our economy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me remind the opposition in the House generally of our five-point plan to grow this economy. First of all, we are in fact reducing business taxes, and the member is aware of that. In particular, we've eliminated the capital tax for manufacturing and the forestry sector, and we cut it by 21% retroactively for all other Ontario businesses.

We're investing \$60 billion over 10 years in infrastructure. That's roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and the like. That creates jobs in the short term and enhances our productivity in the long term.

We're supporting innovation and good, high-paying jobs in the future. We're helping creative Ontarians turn their ideas into Ontario jobs.

We're also partnering with business. I know the leader of the official opposition does not believe in that, but we think it's really important to help businesses which are prepared to make an additional investment to ensure that we get them on their feet and in the race.

Last, but certainly foremost, we are investing in the skills and education of our people. We have 100,000 more young people in colleges and universities today than we did back in 2003. That is real progress.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Over 200,000 good manufacturing jobs and over 10,000 good forest sector jobs have been lost under the McGuinty government. New Democrats have outlined a job stimulus strategy that has been praised by economists, labour leaders, business leaders and workers.

My question is this: In the March 25 budget, is the McGuinty government going to take action on a job stimulus plan, or will it continue to allow thousands of good manufacturing jobs to disappear in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're very much looking forward to presenting our budget in this House and to continuing to find ways to address some of our economic challenges. I think the leader of the NDP understands that when it comes to things like the value of the Canadian dollar, the price of oil, the faltering US economy and the impact of globalization generally, those are factors over which we do not have control. But we do have control

over the level of our taxation, for example. That's why we continue to cut our business taxes. We do have control over the level of investment we make in our people. That's why we continue to invest heavily in skills and education. We have control over the level of investment in infrastructure. That's why, for example, we have a 10-year, \$60-billion investment-in-infrastructure plan. That's the largest of its kind ever. We are creating over 100,000 jobs with that investment alone.

So yes, I very much look forward to presenting the budget in this House. My Minister of Finance will be doing that. We look forward, in that document, to addressing in a further way some of the economic challenges before us at this time.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think what I heard was the Premier looking for excuses. The issue is manufacturing jobs. Ontario is the manufacturing heartland of Canada, and Ontario is losing manufacturing jobs at an alarming rate. The Premier refers to everything other than manufacturing. The fact is, other provinces are taking action. Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec have all implemented manufacturing investment tax credits to sustain manufacturing jobs in those provinces.

My question is this: In this government's March 25 budget, will working people see action on a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit to sustain manufacturing jobs or not?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP likes to claim that we are not doing anything to support manufacturing, but he's just not prepared to acknowledge what we are in fact doing.

Again, in our fall economic statement there was a \$1.3-billion tax cut. That included the elimination of capital taxes for manufacturing and forestry in particular. We're also going to support the federal government's initiative when it comes to dealing with the capital cost allowance so we can continue to accelerate that. That's something that helps manufacturers as well. We're also continuing to reduce business education taxes in the province of Ontario. That is also an initiative which the NDP voted against. The leader of the NDP does not support our plan to assist the auto sector in the province of Ontario, which landed \$7 billion worth of new investment and 7,000 jobs. We have not had support either for our advanced manufacturing strategy, which has landed \$850 million in new investments so far. So it's one thing for the leader of the NDP to claim we are not doing anything for manufacturing, but the record actually tells another story.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Oh, I think your record tells a story. Since your much-ballyhooed advanced manufacturing strategy was announced almost a year ago, another 50,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared. I heard banks, insurance companies and oil companies say they liked the reduction in the capital tax because they raked in billions, but in fact, manufacturers who are not making any money got very little benefit from those measures.

The reality is this: Today the Toronto Stock Exchange has dropped another 400 points, thousands of people are losing their jobs every week, and people are increasingly worried. Provinces like Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Quebec have taken action. My question is this: Is the McGuinty government going to take specific action in the form of a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit, or are we going to see the loss of thousands more manufacturing jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think for Ontarians generally and families in particular, the question that weighs on their minds is, "What is the responsible thing to do in the circumstances? What is the right thing to do in the circumstances?" They know that we don't have control in this Legislature—notwithstanding claims to the contrary from my friends opposite—over the value of the dollar, the price of oil or what's happening to the US economy. But we do have control over the investments we make in the skills and education of our people. That's why we will continue to make those investments, and this budget will reflect that. We do have control over the investments we make in the quality of the health care available to all our families, whether they are employed or not, and that's why we will continue to invest in the health care system. We do have control over the level of investment we make in infrastructure, and when we build roads and bridges, not only does that enhance our productivity in the long term, but it creates hundreds of thousands of jobs in the short term. Those are the kinds of things that Ontario families expect of us. Those are the kinds of things that we will continue to do.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier seems to want to talk about everything other than the loss of manufacturing jobs, but that is the issue, Premier: the alarming loss of over 200,000 manufacturing jobs in a province which is based upon manufacturing.

Last Thursday I was in Thunder Bay, where the workers at the Bombardier transit manufacturing plant are still trying to understand why the McGuinty government scrapped this province's Buy Ontario program in 2005. On Thursday, Mr. Bisson's Buy Ontario public transit bill will be debated and voted on. My question is this: Will the Premier guarantee the quick passage of our Buy Ontario bill to help secure the jobs of those workers at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I thank the member opposite for his question. I assume that's the same Bombardier plant that I visited when I was in Thunder Bay, and I can tell you that the greatest concern that was raised with me at that time was the absence of the NDP leader's support for our plan to build a new subway here in Toronto, that those cars wouldn't be made in that plant.

I've said this, and I know the leader of the NDP understands this, as does his colleague: I think it's really important for us as a government to ensure, as much as

reasonably possible, as we invest billions of dollars in new infrastructure, and public transit in particular, that that translates, again as much as reasonably possible, into Ontario jobs. We are carefully considering that, we'll take a look at Mr. Bisson's proposal, and we look forward to making an announcement shortly on that particular matter.

1440

Mr. Howard Hampton: Those workers in Thunder Bay understand that a new subway line in Toronto means nothing if you continue your policy of saying that the transit equipment can be purchased from Mexico, China or anywhere else. What they want to see is a Buy Ontario policy.

Last week I was also in Hamilton, the heart of industrial Ontario, where an astonishing 30% of Hamilton's manufacturing jobs have disappeared in the last four years under the McGuinty government. That's \$1.1 billion of wages taken out of the Hamilton economy. My question is: In the March 25 budget, will the McGuinty government commit to investing the \$350-million federal vulnerable-communities money in hard-hit communities like Hamilton, or are they going to continue to be ignored by the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would appreciate any pressure whatsoever that the leader of the NDP could bring to bear on the federal government. They have talked about this particular money, but it has yet to flow, and the sooner we can receive it, the more good we can do with it.

With respect to our support for Hamilton, again, the leader of the NDP does in fact know that we worked with Stelco to the tune of \$150 million to participate in its restructuring process. We've given a loan to Dofasco to help reduce the company's production costs and increase its competitiveness. Hamilton will benefit from the government's plan to cut business education tax rates by \$540 million. When fully implemented, Hamilton businesses will benefit by close to \$9 million annually. We are pleased and proud of the fact that we have been able to work with people in Hamilton, as we are with other communities right across the province.

The fact of the matter is that we remain the second-largest manufacturing centre in North America, right after California, and we look forward to continuing to work with the manufacturing sector to ensure that they have a bright and promising future.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier may want to try to ignore it, but your government has received about \$800 million in various labour market development funds from the federal government already. Communities like Hamilton, where literally 30% of the manufacturing jobs have disappeared, are wondering when they are going to see some action from the McGuinty government on these issues.

But it's not just Hamilton. Windsor has watched the loss of literally 30% of their manufacturing jobs. It is a community that is desperately in need of an aggressive, targeted, refundable tax credit such as Quebec has,

Manitoba has, Saskatchewan has and New Democrats advocate. My question is this, once again: Will the people of Windsor see an investment of those federal funds? Will the working people of Windsor see a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit so that we can hopefully sustain some of the manufacturing jobs there? What will we see on March 25, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have been proud to invest close to \$1.5 billion in the city of Windsor in the last four years; that ranges from everything from new infrastructure to a new casino, a new satellite medical school, including a number of partnerships with the Detroit Three. None of those were supported, by the way, by the leader of the NDP. He voted against those. I'm afraid to think of what would have happened to Windsor had we not been there working with the community through these various support initiatives.

We continue to look forward to working with the city of Windsor, the city of Cornwall, the city of Hamilton, the folks in the northwest, northeast, eastern Ontario—any particular community in this province. We've continued to maintain that the best way for us to move forward is not through a reckless cutting of corporate taxes on corporations which happen to be profitable, but rather to invest in our five-point plan.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in your first four budgets you pursued an outdated economic policy of high business tax rates, personal income tax increases, more red tape, higher energy prices and a whopping 43% increase in government spending. The results, Premier, are in. The manufacturing sector in Ontario has always been a powerful job creator in Canada until Dalton McGuinty came along. Some 180,000 high-paying manufacturing jobs have left the province of Ontario. Premier, as you may know, if you combine all of the manufacturing job losses in all of the other provinces, Ontario's manufacturing job losses still exceed that total.

Members of the finance committee from the opposition have put forward plans to reduce the tax and red tape burden. Will you ensure that your fifth budget does include that central policy to create jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Over the last four years this government has eliminated a \$5.6-billion structural deficit. It's eliminated a deficit in health care by investing in over 100 new hospital projects in Ontario. We have hired more than 8,000 new nurses. We have hired 2,500 teachers. And while doing that, we have cut the business taxes that the business community told us to cut.

This government's record is one of job growth since taking office. This government's record is one of responding to those sectors that have faced difficulties and responding to those families that have faced difficulties. Overall, there have been 456,000 net new high-paying jobs in Ontario since we came to office, and

we will continue to work with those sectors and families that are facing difficulties as a result of world economic conditions today while we invest in health, education, infrastructure and a healthier business climate for all Ontarians.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me say that again: Ontario has lost more manufacturing jobs under the Dalton McGuinty government than all of the other provinces combined. When it comes to the manufacturing sector, capital expenditure has decreased by \$745 million since 2003—an actual decrease in investment and businesses. And sadly, Ontario is the only province in Canada to have experienced a decline in manufacturing sales since 2003—a \$1.8-billion decline in manufacturing sales.

Since this Legislature last met, we've seen Kitchener Frame lose 147 jobs, and CanGro in Niagara, citing the high costs of business in Ontario, has laid off hundreds. That's on top of something like 1,000 job losses at National Steel Car in Hamilton.

I say to the Minister: Clearly your outdated economic policies have harmed our economy. Will you reduce the tax and red tape burden in your budget next week?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There's no doubt that the manufacturing sector is facing challenging times, and there's no doubt that it's affected Ontario the way it has because Ontario still is the manufacturing centre of Canada and the second-largest centre in North America. But I'll say this: We reject their philosophy of corporate tax cuts for profitable companies. That's not going to benefit a company that's going to lose money this year. That's why we focused on the capital tax. That's why we focused on the business education tax. But more importantly, we've invested in highly skilled education for our workers so that they can transition to the new jobs. We're investing in a better health care system, we're investing in better schools, and we're investing in partnerships with the business community, with First Nations, and with others to ensure that all Ontarians can respond to the challenges in the economy and that we can all share the prosperity that we richly deserve.

This is still the best place in Canada to do business, it's the best place to invest, and we're proud of Ontarians and proud of our investments to assist this economy through challenging times.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is to the Premier. This morning, an Ontario court sentenced Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug Chief Donny Morris and five other members of the First Nation to six months in jail. What is the substance of their offence? They went to court to defend their aboriginal rights after the McGuinty government failed to fulfill its constitutional duty to consult and accommodate the First Nation in terms of their rights and interests.

My question to the Premier is this: Is this the new relationship with First Nations that the McGuinty government boasts about—send First Nation leaders to jail

when they defend First Nation rights and interests after the McGuinty government has failed to do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

1450

Hon. Michael Bryant: As I said before, we in this government believe that we are going to better the living conditions of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people. We're going to be able to create more jobs, we're going to be able to improve educational opportunities, and we're going to be able to improve the relationship between the First Nations government and the government of Ontario at the negotiating table, and not through the courts. That's why I was up in KI every month this year—I was there in January, February and March. I felt confident that we were getting closer in terms of the arrangements that we were trying to create to rectify a situation that involved a company, PlatineX, that admits now it got off to a terrible start with KI. I'm going to continue to work with KI to try to come up with a resolution that is acceptable to them.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It seems now that the McGuinty government is trying to cover their tracks after the fact. In 2006, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug was granted an injunction against mineral exploration. In his decision, the trial judge referred to the McGuinty government's failure to meet its constitutional obligations to consult with and accommodate First Nation rights and interests. I want to quote the trial judge: "Despite repeated judicial messages delivered over the course of 16 years, the evidentiary record available in this case sadly reveals that the provincial crown has not heard or comprehended this message and has failed in fulfilling this obligation." It's very clear: It's the McGuinty government that's failed.

My question to the Premier is this: Since your government has failed, when are the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines going to resign?

Hon. Michael Bryant: What is important here is to find a way in which KI can in fact work with a company to the betterment of their community. That is what Chief Morris, Sam McKay and council have said to me.

Interjections.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm trying to get the answer out, Speaker.

The finding today obviously is extremely disappointing. As I've said before and will say again, the way through this is not through selective readings of decisions; the way through this is not through litigation efforts; the way through this is to come to an agreement. The ultimate expression of consultation is in an agreement. The people of KI said to me, "Don't give up." I won't give up.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Health. Neovascular wet age-related macular degeneration is a degenerative condition affecting central

vision in people typically aged 50 and over. A new drug called Lucentis works to maintain and even improve vision affected by wet AMD. Approximately 10,000 people are treated for wet AMD each year. In my riding alone, I received a petition with over 400 signatures, and last week the minister announced a plan to make Lucentis available to people who suffer from this condition.

Could the minister explain this plan to the House?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member from Hamilton Mountain for her question. Many in this House over the years have been in the circumstance where cases have been raised about our ability to provide support for people with age-related wet macular degeneration. I'm very pleased that we've added Lucentis to the Ontario drug formulary as a general benefit. What that means is that it is offered as a prescription at their discretion, without any prescribing guideline from Ontario's doctors. Those who are on the Ontario drug benefit, which includes those 65 years of age or older, living in long-term-care homes, in special care residences and people receiving social assistance, will receive the benefit, and the Trillium drug plan—an initiative of Bob Rae—which provides for catastrophic support, would be available for other Ontarians who might be in a circumstance where the costs are too extraordinary. We anticipate that 10,000 individuals per year will benefit from the gift of prolonged sight or improved sight, at a cost over three years of approximately \$100 million.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: The government's plan is good news for Ontarians suffering from wet AMD. However, on Friday the media began to speculate that the government has restricted access to this drug to people who were diagnosed more than three months ago. Some people, including a member of this House, went as far as to suggest that the government was misleading Ontarians with the funding announcement because some people might be excluded. Minister, could you clarify for this House who will be eligible to receive government funding for Lucentis?

Hon. George Smitherman: Of course we're disappointed that any confusion might have arisen around this, but to describe it again, the drug is on the Ontario drug formulary as a general benefit. Those who would receive access would be those who are on the ODB, aged 65 and older, those living in long-term-care homes, special-care residents and people receiving social assistance. But because it's a general benefit and on the Ontario drug formulary, it means that the benefit of the Trillium drug plan, an initiative of Mr. Bob Rae, would be available to them to provide catastrophic support so as to protect people against having to pay too large a share of their income to provide for it.

I repeat again that such a general benefit, without any prescribing guidelines—a doctor can prescribe this. I regret that any confusion may have arisen. But we're pleased that 10,000 Ontarians per year will benefit from the gift of prolonged sight, and in some cases we're pleased that sight can also be regained. This is a \$100-million investment over three years for the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT INVESTMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The minister will know that federal Liberal finance critic John McCallum tabled a motion asking the House of Commons finance committee to hold public hearings to determine why non-bank asset-backed commercial paper was sold to Canadians. Specifically, his motion states that the hearing should determine "whether federal regulators and other stakeholders could have done a better job in anticipating the crisis and/or reducing its cost."

I would like to know whether Ontario's Minister of Finance agrees with his federal colleague Mr. McCallum that financial institutions whose investment decisions resulted in devastating losses to Canadians should be held accountable and whether the public is entitled to answers concerning the decisions that were made.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The asset-backed commercial paper issue and the state of the housing market in the US is manifesting itself in a variety of ways. For instance, a number of large Canadian institutions—the Caisse de dépôt, the Alberta treasury branches, CP Rail, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and Canada Post—have all invested varying amounts of money in asset-backed commercial papers, as have some of the largest financial institutions in the United States, that have resulted in varying results for each of those individual organizations that have invested in these facilities which have proven to be problematic.

In terms of the future, in terms of where all of this is going, I don't think anybody has an answer right now. Of course, Ontario has been actively participating in the resolution of this from the Canadian perspective. In the context of the future, of the resolution of the challenges, we see even the Fed in the United States this weekend has responded to a particularly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I think you'll agree—because I did it through you—I asked a very specific question: Does the minister agree that the public deserves an answer? Mr. McCallum has all-party support for the hearings which will take place in April. The fact that the Ontario Financing Authority invested some \$700 million of Ontario taxpayers' money, at a loss of over \$100 million, perhaps more—we're interested whether this Minister of Finance would agree to have the Ontario Financing Authority answer to the finance committee of this House, to be accountable for their decisions and why they made an irresponsible and imprudent decision on behalf of taxpayers in this province.

1500

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Of course, through estimates, the opposition can call the Ministry of Finance, the Ontario Financing Authority. As I pointed out to the

opposition in the winter session of the House, in fact the Auditor General has audited the books of the Ontario Financing Authority and found everything to be in order.

I would not like listeners to take away the position or the opinion based on the premise of the member's question that in fact the situation is as problematic here in Ontario as it is for other large organizations; that's simply not the case. The fact is, yes, through estimates committee, absolutely, the Auditor General has the ability to look at our books every year, and signed off on them in the past year. I imagine he'll be looking at them again this year. So there is accountability. There is transparency. The initiatives undertaken by the McGuinty government in the whole area of transparency and accountability have replaced the secrecy that went on here for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Today the Premier dished out more thin gruel to the poorest and neediest citizens of this province. He announced that the Liberals' affordable housing repair plan is a fraction of what the city of Toronto alone requires. He announced that their recycled dental care strategy has more nerve than a sore tooth. And now he adds insult to injury by expanding a poverty hotline to nowhere. Half of Ontario's poor will soon be able to discover that the housing, the money and the help they need simply do not exist. To the Premier: When will Ontarians see a real anti-poverty plan instead of the sham announcements of the last two days?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm glad to see the member opposite supporting our plan to reduce poverty in this province, but I can tell you one thing: We are not going to take the simplistic approach that the NDP has become famous for. We are going to take a thoughtful approach. Over the next several months, we are going to be developing a comprehensive property reduction strategy, complete with measures and timelines. We are going to be listening to people across the province, and we will be developing a strategy that will make a real difference in delivering better opportunities for people in this province.

Mr. Michael Prue: As I take that answer, it appears that you're going to phone up and you're going to find out that there's nothing available at all. Ontarians are hungry for a real poverty strategy, not a telephone to nowhere. That means real investments in building affordable housing. It means having a real living wage. It means ending the clawback. It means increasing social assistance rates for our poorest families. Instead of telling the poor to dial a hotline to nowhere, what will the McGuinty Liberals do to ensure that vulnerable Ontarians receive proper nutrition, shelter and health care now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This government is an activist government. We have introduced the Ontario child benefit, which is going to be rolling out every month starting in July, which ends the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. It goes far beyond ending the clawback, and you know that. The minimum wage is going up at the end of this month to \$8.75, on its way to \$10.25.

This government isn't going to take lessons from you on what we need to be doing to reduce poverty. The housing people were asking for \$30 million; Minister Watson today delivered \$100 million.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr. Pat Hoy: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. This week, Canadian Agricultural Safety Week began. On average, 30 men, women and children in Ontario were fatally injured every year between 1990 and 2000, according to a report published by the Canadian Agricultural Injury Surveillance Program.

Farm safety is of significant interest to the constituents in my riding and the many farm families that reside in Chatham-Kent-Essex. The number of fatal injuries on farms has decreased on average over time, but there's much more work to be done. One fatal injury on a farm is one too many.

Minister, can you please tell us what kinds of initiatives your ministry has taken to make sure that farmers in my riding and across Ontario are safer?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thank you very much, Speaker, and to the member as well, a farmer himself who always brings excellent questions about the agriculture industry.

I'm very happy to say that Canadian Agricultural Safety Week does give us an opportunity to reflect on the hard work that has been done over the years to improve farm safety. My ministry provides \$120,000 each year to the Farm Safety Association. The Farm Safety Association is the lead agency to promote farm health and safety. In partnership with OMAFRA, they are working on a number of projects. For example, they will publish safety articles in local farm publications right across Ontario. They will also deliver the farm accident rescue program. This brings together rural volunteer fire departments and trains them in how they can, when they arrive at a fire on a farm, appropriately attack that. The Farm Safety Association has also piloted a play yard safety program in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Pat Hoy: Minister, as you would know, this is Canadian Agricultural Safety Week. On average, 115 people are killed and another 1,500 are seriously injured in farm-related incidents across Canada each and every year, according to the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association.

Farm safety is an issue of concern to the residents of my riding. They want to know that this government is taking the issue seriously. Can you tell us what our government is doing to improve the safety of agricultural workers not only in my riding but across the province?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: May I extend—just taking a look at the name of the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, even his riding sounds Irish—a happy St. Patrick's Day to the member.

Workplace health and safety on farms is an important issue to all involved in the farming sector. Given our government's demonstrated commitment to reducing workplace injuries, I can assure you that enhancing workplace health and safety in farming operations is a priority. That's why we've extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to cover farming operations. Since June 2006, farm workers have had the rights other workers already have, including the right to know about workplace hazards, the right to participate in workplace health and safety decisions and the right to refuse unsafe work. This is helping to reduce farm injuries and fatalities, lessening human suffering, reducing economic costs and contributing to a stronger economy for the whole province.

We know there's more work to be done, but we're proud of what we've done so far in reducing workplace injuries.

DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is to the Premier, also the MPP for Ottawa South.

The United Nations has rebuked our city, the city of Ottawa, for violating international drug treaties because of this government. The government has gone behind the city's back and funded a crack pipe program despite their protests. The Shepherds of Good Hope say needle distribution such as that funded by the provincial government is too dangerous. And today, an Ottawa Tim Hortons is considering removing its washroom to stop drugs from being shot up there.

The government's anti-drug strategy is bizarre. It is more about handing out crack pipes and not about providing drug treatment. Will the Premier respect the United Nations, the government of Canada's laws and the city of Ottawa and stop funding unaccountable programs that hand out drug paraphernalia and place it in the hands of drug dealers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I would like to thank the honourable member for her question. I note in her question and in some of her media comments and the correspondence she has written to me that she uses the words "philosophical" and "ideological," but in point of fact, our strategy is motivated by only one thing, which is to do our very best to limit the transmission of infectious diseases like hepatitis C and HIV, based on evidence. While she does quote the United Nations, they themselves are in conflict with the World Health Organization, which is part of the UN, who speak about the

necessity of doing our very best for people who are addicted.

But I do agree with the honourable member that this is not one solution. It's one part of a continuum to engage people in the conversation and get them thinking about the things they can do to mitigate the risks to their health as we look, especially in the Ottawa community, to enhance our capacity for treatment. I will look forward very much to working with the honourable member as we seek to do that in response to the calls from that community.

1510

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate that the government has one side of the story, but they are long on the supply side of drug paraphernalia and short on the treatment side. Their spending priorities are all wrong.

Last week, this Liberal majority defeated my request for a drug rehab centre for youth in the city of Ottawa. Yet in today's Ottawa Citizen, the Minister of Municipal Affairs is onside with that as a priority. I need to know: Which is it? This government is all over the map. There is no balance. There is no acknowledgment that prevention and treatment of drug abuse should be our priority as a province. Will the Premier commit today to funding a drug treatment facility in the city of Ottawa so we can get the kids—your government has provided crack pipes to—off drugs, off the streets and on the right track?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's the honourable member who has a little bit of an ideological burr under her saddle. To put things in perspective, we're spending a relatively few number of dollars, several hundred thousand at the very most, on the distribution of products designed to prevent the spread of infection, whereas we're spending hundreds of millions of dollars on our existing addiction treatment capacity.

But where I think the honourable member is especially not particularly up to date—I spent a lot of time in Ottawa talking to the media about this, and I was very clear to say that we're interested in working with the Ottawa community on enhancing the continuum and most certainly enhancing access to treatment, which in the very first answer I acknowledged was insufficient. My colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been working with the city of Ottawa on this. We're expecting a report within a month or so, and I can tell the honourable member and all members of this House that it is most certainly the intention of our government to enhance treatment capacity for individuals in the Ottawa community and indeed in other parts of the province of Ontario.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Over a year ago Minister Smitherman said that a guaranteed minimum standard of care in nursing homes would treat people like—and he used the word "widgets." Then he flip-flopped and promised he would

mandate a minimum standard of care by regulation instead of including it in Bill 140. I would like to know what his views are today.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to thank the honourable member for her question. I believe, though, she has misunderstood one part of it, and I'll attempt in the first answer to address that.

We're certainly the government that will be returning the minimum standards in the province of Ontario. But some people would like those minimums to pretend that every single resident in an Ontario long-term-care home requires exactly the same amount of care. My only point was to ensure that as we do move forward with the adoptions of standards we don't have a one-size-fits-all solution, because obviously some residents in long-term care will be requiring a higher degree of support. I can tell the honourable member that when her party was in office they had a standard which was not enforceable at 2.25 hours, and I'm very pleased—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: No, in an urban area, we walk. But I do want the honourable member to know that we're proud, through investments so far, that our hourly standards are at about 2.95 and that Shirley Sharkey will be giving advice as to how we may make further investments, which is most certainly at the heart of our plan for long-term care.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Minister, I remember your tears four years ago when you promised a revolution in long-term care. Then, over a year ago, you promised a guaranteed minimum standard of care. Instead, you reduced the serious problem of inadequate care to jokes about incontinence products. Minister, don't you think that our loved ones in long-term-care homes deserve a guaranteed minimum standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on care a day?

Hon. George Smitherman: On this matter, I have always been guided by the issue of dignity, which I experienced in the circumstances of the last seven and a half months of my father's life, when he was almost entirely dependent because a stroke had reduced him to the capacity to move his eyes. In the comments that I made about incontinence products, I most certainly did not trivialize the matter and I most certainly did not offer these as jokes. While I may have made a mistake, and I apologized for it very clearly, for speaking about things that I was contemplating, to have a new honourable member question my sincerity on this point is rather disappointing. I'm privileged to be part of a government that since 2003 has invested 9.55 million additional annual hours of care in long-term care, and I'm ever so proud to be part of a government that intends to continue making investments to enhance the quality of care for our residents in long-term-care homes.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I've got a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. One of this government's major achievements in its previous term was protecting over 1.8 million acres in the green-

belt in the Oak Ridges moraine. I know that many of my constituents and, I'm sure, constituents throughout the province like to explore Ontario's vast agricultural land and the green space that was protected. My own community of Oakville has a history of protecting and promoting its green space, and I've consistently voted to protect and expand Oakville's precious green space.

Minister, you've recently announced that you are looking into actually expanding the greenbelt. Can you tell me when we might see some action on this very important file?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me commend the member from Oakville, one of the most eloquent defenders of the environment in this Legislative Assembly, who has been supportive of the greenbelt since day one.

We're very proud of the greenbelt. It's 1.8 million acres of protected green space. It's good for agriculture, it's good for the economy and it's certainly good for the people of Ontario. On February 28, we celebrated the third anniversary of the greenbelt. This was an initiative that was in our 2003 platform. The vision, the guidance and the leadership of our Premier and my predecessor, the member from Kingston and the Islands, saw to it that we were protecting for generations to come this important natural asset. I'm very pleased to report that we started the consultation process with municipalities so that in fact we can expand the greenbelt, because this government will never shrink the greenbelt.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister. That's excellent news for the people of Ontario and all of Oakville. I'm really pleased to see that we are moving forward on this commitment.

As I said, I know my own community, the town of Oakville, recently passed a resolution asking you if you will protect lands further in the north Oakville natural heritage system as well as natural conservation lands within the Oakville land assembly. I want to tell you that I support Oakville's resolution. I commend Mayor Burton and the Oakville council for taking action on this issue and hope to see more of it around the province. It's important, we all know, to protect Oakville and Ontario's green space for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

Minister, could you tell me today: From the application that you've received to date, will Oakville be considered for greenbelt expansion in this matter?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to commend the town of Oakville and Mayor Burton, whom I had the opportunity to chat with at the Municipal Leaders for the Greenbelt luncheon just a few weeks ago. Once the criteria and the process are finalized, we'll encourage Oakville and other communities to apply. I would urge all members of this House to go out and encourage their constituents to go out to the public consultation sessions we're holding across the province. The one on April 10 is taking place at the Ramada hotel in Guelph. It goes from 5:30 to 9. The information is available on the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website.

There are five consultations taking place across the province. We want to hear from the public, we want to

hear from landowners and we want to hear from municipalities. We look forward to making announcements in the future to expand this very important natural asset, something we are all proud of.

How appropriate that on St. Patrick's Day I received a greenbelt question from a gentleman named Mr. Flynn.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: To the Minister of Agriculture and Food: In the fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance announced a program to help horticulture, beef and the pork industry get through tough times because of "higher input costs, the stronger Canadian dollar and lower market prices." But many young and expanding farmers are disqualified or receiving next to nothing. Payments to farmers were based on sales from 2000 to 2004, and if 50% of their income in 2005 and 2006 wasn't from pork or beef, they didn't qualify.

Ontario Pork tells us that many of these young and expanding farmers who had pork in 2007 are the ones with the greatest need. The Veyhof family in my riding are young farmers who are struggling to feed their four children and hold their farm. How do I explain to them that they aren't getting any help to get through these tough times, but their neighbour, who retired and got out of pigs two years ago, got a cheque for \$80,000? Minister, how many retired people in Florida are getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

1520

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it is important to make some very important clarifications with respect to this program. We had the opportunity to meet with the cattle producers and the pork producers, who explained to us the fact that over a number of years there's been significant hardship in their particular sectors and that this government had a role to play. Our government has stepped up to the plate. We have recognized that over a number of years, in the hog, cattle and horticulture sector, there has been serious hurt. That is why the dollars have flowed the way they have. That is why they have been delivered the way they have to farmers who, over a number of years, have suffered losses.

I think the point that the honourable member wishes to make is important, when they suggest that there are no resources available for them. There is the Canada agricultural income stabilization program. They can apply for cash advances. There are interim payments. So our government is there on many levels, in many ways, to support the agriculture industry in the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm please to present a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many vehicles on Highway 12 are continuing to travel at speeds exceeding the speed limit through the village of Greenbank;

"Whereas residents in the community are deeply concerned over the safety of pedestrians along this provincial highway in Greenbank because of the high speeds and volume of traffic;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Ministry of Transportation proceed immediately with the following safety improvements:

"—repainting the crosswalk;

"—a new overhead flashing-light crosswalk sign;

"—the installation of flashing lights at the entrance and exit to the village of Greenbank to the north and to the south alerting drivers to the reduced speed; and

"—consideration for this area to be designated a community safety zone."

I present this on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham, and I'm pleased to sign it.

PESTICIDES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have here a whack of petitions, as we say in good anglais, signed by a number of people from across Ontario, over 4,000 signatures collected by Joel Theriault. It reads as follows—and I think I'll need probably two pages for all of this because it's kind of heavy:

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to prohibit the use of chemical herbicides by the forestry industry, given:

"(1) the non-chemical alternatives which currently exist to meet vegetation management needs and which are in use in other parts of Canada, such as Quebec;

"(2) the firm stance against the non-essential use of these chemicals which has been taken by the medical community, having regard to human and environmental health. See www.domtar.org for additional information;

"(3) the significant possibility of violating the rights of all Canadians (especially resource-dependent aboriginal communities) to clean drinking water, edible plants, wildlife and fish;

"(4) the largely unfulfilled commitments already made by the federal government to reduce dependency on pesticides and herbicides. See <http://nfsf.forest.ca/strategies/strategy5/html> for additional information; and

"(5) the questionable performance of the federal government to regulate pesticides (including herbicides) for the health and safety of Canadians. 'The federal government does not have reliable, up-to-date information about pesticides that it needs to manage them effectively. It lacks significant information on the use of pesticides and exposure to them. Research on health impacts is very limited' (1.134 AG). 'Overall, we conclude that the federal government is not managing pesticides effectively' (AG 1.136).

"In several cases, the measures listed on pesticide labels, even if followed, appear not to have been enough

to prevent environmental damage’—2003 Auditor General report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to the House of Commons, Chapter 1: Managing the Safety and Accessibility of Pesticides. Report viewable at www.oag-bvg.gc.ca.”

I have three pages here to carry back all of these petitions put forward by Joel. I would give them to one, but I’m sure there would be something like a compensation claim coming.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I present to you today about 2,000 signatures that were presented to me during the rally held at Queen’s Park on January 16. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

“Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

“Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of great scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

“Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as ‘surplus’ to its academic needs and subject to sale for development;

“Whereas the observatory occupies an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect such a property of historical, scientific and natural significance from being used as commercial development.”

LORD’S PRAYER

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord’s Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

“Whereas the recitation of the Lord’s Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor Johns Graves Simcoe; and

“Whereas the Lord’s Prayer’s message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their ‘daily bread’ and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

“Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord’s Prayer;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord’s Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature.”

I affix my name in full support.

CONTAMINATED PROPERTY

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas in 2002, Hydro One Inc. accused Schmidt Flowers Ltd. of contaminating the Hydro One Dryden, Ontario, site with diesel fuel and threatened to make them liable for the cleanup;

“Whereas in June 2007, the Ontario Ministry of the Environment concluded that Hydro One Inc. contaminated its own Dryden, Ontario, site with diesel fuel spills from its own above ground diesel fuel tank;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“—to acknowledge the Ministry of the Environment’s conclusion that Hydro One Inc. contaminated its own property;

“—to acknowledge that Hydro One Inc. wrongly accused Schmidt Flowers Ltd. of contaminating the Hydro One Dryden, Ontario, site with diesel fuel; and

“—to acknowledge that Hydro One Inc. should compensate Schmidt Flowers Ltd. for damages and costs incurred over the past five years.”

This has been signed by literally hundreds of residents of the community of Dryden, Ontario, in my constituency, and I have affixed my signature as well.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn’s and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

“Whereas this disease requires patients’ fast access to public washrooms;

“Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

“Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations; and

“Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

“We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it, and give it to page Ramandeep, who is here with me today.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition sent to me from the Gentle Shepherd community church just outside of Flesherton.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this.

1530

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and I have affixed my signature. Thank you.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was sent to me by Harold Chambers and Wayne Sim, whom I'd like to thank. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital

project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I thank those who signed the petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Alexander to carry it for me.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas GO Transit:

"—has been plagued with frequent service disruptions, often leading to trip cancellations and stranding passengers at GO stations;

"—has consistently shown poor on-time performance, which declines each year;

"—has blamed many of the disruptions on long-delayed construction projects it has recently undertaken;

"—has cited underfunding by previous under Ontario governments for delaying critical infrastructure improvements necessary to handle GO's growing passenger volumes;

"—fails to provide accurate information when major delays occur;

"—shows little regard for passengers' schedules or concerns; and

"—just approved a fare hike effective March 15, 2008, in spite of consistently poor performance and customer service;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—to require GO Transit to provide a rebate on fares paid when GO Transit equipment failure, late arrival of equipment, staff shortage or rail congestion results in a cancellation of trains or a delay of more than 20 minutes to final destination;

"—better and more timely notification of transit cancellations, modifications and delays; and

"—More cars added to trains to ease the overcrowding, which causes safety concerns."

I agree with this petition and I'm pleased to add my signature.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition about good basic health care in Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve a universal, high-quality public health care system; and

"Whereas numerous studies have shown that the best health care is that which is delivered close to home; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government is working to increase Ontarians' access to family doctors through the introduction of family health teams that allow doctors to serve their communities more effectively; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has fulfilled its promise to create new family health teams to bring more doctors to more Ontario families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the McGuinty government's efforts to improve access to family doctors through innovative programs like family health teams."

Since I support this petition, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I want to thank Bruce and Joy Osmond for sending these petitions to me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly received about the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre.

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures

that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four-fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I am glad that the following people have signed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 5, 2007, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It is of course a pleasure to address my first speech in the Legislature by responding to the throne speech. I understand that custom dictates I use a portion of my inaugural speech to describe who I am and how I am here representing the riding of Dufferin-Caledon. As with most stories, it is not a direct route.

I grew up on a family farm in north Simcoe—Tay township, actually, as my colleague from Simcoe North takes great delight in telling everyone. My mom and dad raised seven children. I suppose you could say it was during the Jones family dinners and negotiating use of the family car that I first practised my debating skills. Hopefully, those skills will serve me well in the coming years on the floor of this Legislature.

Dufferin-Caledon has been my home for 20-plus years. David and I have been lucky to work and live and raise our children in a community that has made us feel safe and has offered us economic opportunities. Many of you will know it for its rolling farmland and beautiful ski and trail systems like the Bruce Trail, but if you really want to know Dufferin-Caledon, you must know the people. We have an incredible cross-section of families who have been in the community for generations, to newcomers who have found a jewel and work hard to protect it.

I was nominated on January 13 last year. There were six candidates interested in becoming the Progressive Conservative candidate in Dufferin-Caledon. Paul Hong, Jim Wallace, Drew Brown, Lynne Moore, Nick Garisto and I all saw the opportunity to carry the PC banner in the October election as an opportunity not to be missed. It was an opportunity because, as many of you in this House know, we have had some rather special individuals representing Dufferin-Caledon over the years.

I've had the opportunity to work with and learn from three special MPPs. David Tilson gave me the opportunity to work with him as his executive assistant beginning in 1991. David, as many of you who served with him in this House will know, was a great teacher on the importance of working for your constituency. I will be forever grateful to him for the opportunity he gave me.

1540

Ernie Eves also served the residents of Dufferin-Caledon and will be fondly remembered for moving forward two road bypass projects, in Orangeville and Bolton, that had been stalled for over 20 years. The Orangeville bypass is now built and has relieved much of the pressure to move vehicles through and around Orangeville. Bolton's bypass will assist our communities to move goods and services through the GTA more efficiently.

Finally, and most recently, John Tory was our member for two years. John learned a great deal about rural Ontario from farmers in Dufferin and Caledon. I was proud to be part of a team that worked with him when he was the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey.

Jennifer Walmsley, Bianca Lankheit and Kathy Boynton all worked hard to ensure that issues in the riding were dealt with quickly and efficiently. If you called with a problem in Dufferin, you had the best people to help you work through.

Over the course of that nomination over a year ago, 2,500 people took out Progressive Conservative memberships to participate in what I believe was the largest nomination across the province. Obviously, I was pleased to be chosen from the group of six to be the candidate of record for the Progressive Conservatives in Dufferin-Caledon.

I tell you this not to blow my horn but to reinforce that nominations are an important part of the process that brings us to this historic place. I'm confident that after a nomination race that spanned seven months and an election race that spanned 10 months, I've listened to thousands of people across Dufferin-Caledon tell me what is important to them and their families.

As a new member of the Legislative Assembly, I would never wish to suggest that the work done in this chamber is unimportant, but without the anchor of our ridings telling us what is important and what issues need to be dealt with by our governments, we would be poorly prepared to act appropriately. We risk becoming insulated from what is really important if we do not make the effort to connect and learn from people in our ridings.

I hope that this is an important consideration as the House leaders work together to make this place more family-friendly. Sitting Fridays, taking us away from the important work that occurs in our ridings, will not improve debate in this chamber. On the contrary, it may insulate us from the very people we need to hear from and listen to.

Today, in the beginning of what I expect will be a lengthy parliamentary session, we will have many opportunities to review, debate and, yes, disagree about

proposed legislation. Let's also make sure that we are given the opportunity to discuss, listen and learn from the residents in our riding, who will ultimately be living with these decisions. When we stop talking and start listening to the farmers who are struggling; business people who worry about the high dollar and lack of skilled workers; volunteer organizations who see where our legislation falls short in implementation; and out in the community when parents talk about their children's health and safety, it is then that I truly understand how important our role as lawmakers is.

During the orientation session, the Clerk and other staff who tried to prepare us for this role inside the chamber told us some of the history: how the eagle facing the opposition side represents the need to always be vigilant and the owl facing the government side, the need to listen. As difficult as that is, and particularly so when we have all been successful in a campaign where we carry our political stripes proudly, I know I have the responsibility to represent the entire riding.

As I begin my new career here and I listen to debates and review legislation that is brought forward by ministers and private members, I've made a commitment to the people of Dufferin-Caledon to review everything with the lens of, "Is it good for Dufferin-Caledon?" Unfortunately, political promises seem to mean less and less these days. Nonetheless, it is a commitment I've made to the people of Dufferin-Caledon and I intend to keep it.

It is through this lens that I must raise a number of concerns that I see with the throne speech of this government. Having just completed a large consultation process—you may know it better as an election campaign—I know that many of the issues raised during the election are being ignored by this government, issues such as our community hospital, Headwaters Health Care Centre. Headwaters hospital is funded at one of the lowest levels of all community hospitals across the province, and yet the community it serves is growing at a faster rate than many other parts of Ontario. Headwaters's funding is falling behind because of the growth that Dufferin-Caledon is experiencing. This situation was verified in a recent government report prepared by the joint policy and planning committee, which reported that Headwaters's costs actually are 11% below the expected cost. In other words, our community hospital must make do with 11% less than other hospitals across Ontario. It's not fair to Headwaters or to the residents of Dufferin-Caledon. All candidates agreed during the election that it is now time for health and social services funding to be based on growth and population, not historical data.

This funding shortfall translates into longer wait lines in the emergency department and more individuals leaving our community to seek care for themselves and their family. The throne speech sets out an objective "to help more Ontarians receive care closer to home," but without more support for our community hospital, the opposite will happen. More residents of Dufferin-Caledon will need to travel outside the community to

receive the care they need. I was hopeful that the throne speech would talk about this important issue, but unfortunately it has been ignored.

During the provincial election, the Liberal Party committed to providing growth funding for the GTA/905 and Dufferin county areas. A PricewaterhouseCoopers report reveals the need is now, and yet the throne speech is silent on supporting the health and social services needs of high-growth communities such as Dufferin-Caledon.

Hospital funding is not the only health care issue facing my community. The Central West LHIN's plan—local health integration network—indicates our community has the lowest number of specialists, the lowest number of nurses and the second-lowest number of family physicians in the province.

A family doctor is the gatekeeper to all of the Liberals' primary health reforms. Many families in Dufferin-Caledon do not have a family doctor, and therefore they are shut out of the new family health team services referenced in the throne speech. Without a family doctor, our emergency rooms get overused and residents cannot access specialists. A comprehensive physician recruitment and retention strategy must be the government's priority, and yet no specific actions are mentioned in this throne speech.

In Dufferin-Caledon we are looking for some immediate relief with our transportation infrastructure. While we would love to see commuters be given more options than driving cars, in rural Ontario, roads and bridges are often our only option. Dufferin-Caledon cannot wait until 2020, and municipalities will continue to look to the province for help in repairing roads and bridges.

Perhaps if the government was willing to borrow an idea from our PC platform to spend Ontario's gas and fuel taxes on what they were intended for—our transportation infrastructure—we could stop the finger-pointing and get on with the job of fixing the problem. The solution is not to announce last-minute, end-of-year surplus bonuses. Our municipal partners deserve more consideration than a promise that "if we have a surplus and if you apply on time, then you can try and grab some of the leftovers." It reminds me of something I was told at the ROMA conference last month: "As a municipality, I feel like a salivating dog waiting for a bone." Now we are expecting the municipalities to fight over the scraps as well. That's not good budgeting and it's not fair to our municipal partners and taxpayers.

The only mention of agriculture—a ministry I will be watching closely, not only because I still have a family member operating on the family farm but also because my friend Wayne Innis will demand that agriculture issues not be overlooked for another four years—in the throne speech is for a risk management program for grain and oilseed, which is long overdue. But how about looking at how to improve the agriculture sector so that Ontarians know the value of eating locally grown products? And, as important, stop regulating farmers out of business. By the time we have convinced people to eat

local, there won't be any farmers willing to produce anything to sell because of your constantly changing regulations that end up adding costs to their production without compensation.

The Progressive Conservative Party and our leader, John Tory, believe the state of the province's economy, especially its manufacturing sector, is far and away the number one priority facing the government and the Legislature. As my colleague from Niagara West-Glanbrook highlighted in our pre-budget consultation dissenting report, I can assure you that businesses in my community are very concerned about the impact of a strong Canadian dollar and slowing economy. Yet the throne speech offers no specific plan to support our manufacturing sector.

1550

As lawmakers, we have a responsibility to work with our manufacturing partners and provide them with the tools to succeed. Businesses need a consistent environment in which to operate. They expect governments to look out for their interests and prepare for economic changes like skilled worker shortages, not implement onerous regulations with zero consultation, zero debate and, I would have to say, zero thought, like the February holiday.

If I can close with one comment, it's that we must do a better job of listening and learning from our constituents. There are so many talented, bright individuals out in our community getting down to business, making a difference in our lives. They have some incredible ideas on what needs to be done and where we need to focus our resources. Let's not limit ourselves to one ideological stand or become so narrow-minded in our deliberations that we forget whom we are here to serve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to congratulate the member on what was by far one of the better speeches you hear at the beginning of a session. I thought the member brought some interesting points but was also quite eloquent in her own way. I'm sure that the voice she brings on behalf of her constituents to this Legislature is going to be appreciated by those people she represents.

I know she wanted to talk about a number of issues which I'll get a chance to talk about later, so I won't do that in my reply to her speech. But I want to just say a couple of things. I agree: When you look at what this government says in its throne speech and what it does by way of actions, either in the last term or this term, you have a bit of a hard time trying to juxtapose the two of them and marry them together, because the government has a habit of saying really nice things. The government gets up, gives a throne speech, talks about what it is going to do, and we sit there and think, "Well, some of that ain't bad." They're going to declare war on poverty; they're going to declare war on unemployment; they're going to do the kinds of things that need to be done to protect the environment.

But the member is right. You look at the actions of the government and you say to yourself, "Where's the beef?"

I look at the poverty file and I say that even where I come from in northern Ontario we have organizations that are desperately in need of support from the provincial and federal governments in order to assist them, such as a Good Samaritan Inn that provides basically a place for people to stay when they're on the street, and they can't get any funding from this provincial government. We've been going after that for the better part of six months to a year. People are at their wits' end. But this government says, "There's a war on poverty." I just want to say to the member, if there's a war it's a pretty silent one, because nobody sees the government out in the trenches doing the work that has to be done.

Mr. Tim Hudak: A cold war.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You're a mile ahead of me. That's where I was going to end. Tim, you're good. I've got to say, you're really good.

If this government has a war going on on poverty, I'll say, like my good friend Mr. Tim Hudak, it's got to be a cold war, because there's not a lot going on when it comes to assisting the people who are most in need in this province.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I too would like to congratulate the member from Dufferin-Caledon on her maiden speech. I feel like I have many connections with Dufferin as well. Many of you know that I was a school board trustee for 15 years before I was elected to the Legislature. After the Tories decided that we should have school board amalgamation, my old board of Wellington became the Upper Grand board, which covers both Wellington and Dufferin. So, in fact, I ended up spending quite a bit of time in Orangeville, Shelburne, Grand Valley and all the communities in Dufferin county, which truly is a delightful county. It really is the roof of Ontario. Because it's the roof of Ontario, one of the things that we have been able to do in Dufferin county as part of our environment and energy program is actually have one of the largest wind farms in Dufferin county. Just west of Shelburne a huge wind farm has grown up which is now providing significant wind power to the provincial grid. We're quite proud of that initiative.

My new colleague from Dufferin-Caledon mentioned the issue of doctor shortages, and certainly that's a real issue. But I think it's worth noting that we have made a number of inroads in that area. We have opened the first new medical school in Ontario in years—in decades. But in addition to that new medical school, we've actually created satellite campuses at some of the existing schools. The closest to the member's constituency in Dufferin would be a new satellite campus of McMaster which is located in Waterloo, but that will be serving the Wellington-Dufferin area as well.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It's a great pleasure to rise to congratulate and commend the member from Dufferin-Caledon on her maiden speech. I've known the member for a significant period of time. I don't want to suggest anything related to her age or mine, but I think it's certainly at least back into the early 1990s. She comes to this place probably as qualified as anyone who

has ever been elected to office. She is a rookie as an elected member, but she has served the people of the province and served that riding since—was it 1991, Sylvia, you mentioned? So when you look at that expertise, that experience, you know that she is going to do an outstanding job for the people of her riding and the people of the province of Ontario.

I've served with the predecessors she mentioned—Mr. Tilson, Mr. Eves and Mr. Tory—and I think I obviously served with whomever preceded them. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke suggests that I was around when the Magna Carta was signed, but that's not quite true. I gather it was Mavis Wilson—I was just reminded—who was here for a brief tenure, and then David Tilson joined us in 1990.

One of the things about being around in that period of time was a very significant rebuilding process for the Progressive Conservative Party after the 1990 election. Sylvia went through that process, and I think that experience is going to be very helpful in the next couple of years with her background. Looking back at those years in this place, we were then the third party. It was probably the most exciting time that I've had as a member and the fact that we built this party into a contender and actually became the government of the province of Ontario. I know that Sylvia is going to play an important role on our behalf and on behalf of her riding and the people of this great province. Congratulations.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too would like to congratulate MPP Sylvia Jones for a very interesting maiden speech. I haven't heard that many, also being a new member, but it certainly kept me interested. It helped me discover her riding of Dufferin-Caledon, which I must admit I didn't know too much about, but I feel I know a whole lot more. I also appreciate the hard work that she's put in, the time that she's put in to win her nomination and then win the election. I didn't realize that those kinds of contests for nominations happen outside the NDP. I'm happy to see that in the Conservatives you also have to run for a nomination; that your leader doesn't pick you.

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No parachuting on this side either. So it's very refreshing to see that she was well qualified.

I also appreciated the importance that she puts on being available to her riding and listening to the needs of her riding. I agree with her that when we get elected, people say that you're going to represent your constituency at Queen's Park, but we also have a responsibility to represent Queen's Park in our constituency, and I'm happy to see that this is also something that we share. We also share that we sit side by side, separated by a little pathway. So congratulations on your maiden speech—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yeah, I was trying to be nice—an ideological pathway, but a physical one as well.

Anyway, congratulations on a job well done, and welcome to Queen's Park.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Dufferin-Caledon, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like to thank the members from Timmins-James Bay, Guelph, Leeds-Grenville and Nickel Belt for their kind words. I hope they are not the only kind words that are said in the coming four years. I am sure there will be opportunities for us to work together on areas of mutual concern to our constituents.

I think, in wrapping up, I'd like to go back briefly to something that was put out today, and that's the pre-budget consultation, the dissenting opposition report. I think it encapsulates very well what we in the Progressive Conservative Party see as the missing links to the throne speech and, I guess, our hopes and desires for what will be coming forward in the upcoming budget.

We talk specifically about:

- accelerating plans announced in the fall economic statement to eliminate the capital tax for all businesses immediately. If it's a good idea, let's move forward with it now and not wait. This is when businesses and manufacturing sectors in Ontario need it—now;

- reducing the corporate income tax rate to a competitive level and providing some tax relief for small businesses;

- setting and committing to real targets to reduce the regulatory burden on all businesses, and I would add a caveat to include the agricultural industry in there as well;

- providing some tax relief for hard-working Ontario families who are feeling the crunch as our manufacturing contracts;

- beginning serious consultations with Ottawa on the subject of tax reform; and

- addressing the looming energy crisis, including a responsible plan to replace dirty coal power.

And there are others that I would urge you to review and consider in your deliberations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've been looking forward to this opportunity since sometime before Christmas. We got kind of pre-empted because we had a parliamentary break, and I didn't get a chance earlier. So I now get to make my comments on the throne speech. I know my good friends on both the opposition and government benches have been just standing by waiting for this.

I want to start off on a positive note. I want to say something nice. I listened to the throne speech like every other member in this House, and I read it after. I saw the media reports in regard to the throne speech. And if you listened to the government and what they were trying to say, you'd say, "Well maybe Dalton's finally trying to figure it out and kind of got it. He's said, 'We're going to have a war on poverty and we're going to do something in order to assist those people who are most in need in the province of Ontario.'"

You know what? I applaud that. I think that's a great idea. I think we don't do enough, and I truly looked

forward to seeing what the government would do. They talked about other things, but the point is, when you listen to the words spoken in that throne speech and you look at the actions, as I said earlier, where's the beef?

It's not a lot. The government got elected back in October. They had four years of mandate prior to this. Do you think that poverty is an issue that just got invented in October 2007? Everybody in this assembly knows, and everybody in this province and the media gallery knows, that poverty has been an issue, unfortunately, that's plagued all of our societies for a long time, which is really galling in a place like Ontario. We're the richest province in Canada. We're outdoing the Americans when it comes to what is happening as far as—well, as far as the American economy, let's not compare ourselves to them. They're in deep trouble. But the point is that you measure a society by the way it takes care of those most unable to defend themselves.

We look at what happens to people in poverty: It's a vicious cycle. We see it in Sudbury; we see it in Timmins; we see it in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton—everywhere. Unfortunately, there are people—sometimes it's an issue of mental health—who are not able to do well and hold a job and bring an income in and support themselves and sometimes their family. Sometimes it's issues having to do with health. Other times it's an issue that the person just is not able to get the job that they want because they don't have the educational requirement for the type of job they need in order to sustain the kind of lifestyle that they would have. Unfortunately, there are far more people in our society today who are classified as in poverty.

So what has this government done? Let me get the list. Hang on; I'm sure it's here somewhere. I'm looking. Hang on a second.

There's nothing. The government has done absolutely nothing when it comes to really dealing with poverty. If we're serious about poverty, then we should be doing some concrete things.

Let me give you a couple of quick examples. In the city of Timmins there is an organization called the Good Samaritan Inn. The Good Samaritan Inn provides a roof for people who need a place to stay short-term because they find themselves to be homeless. Being homeless in Toronto is bad enough, but imagine being homeless in Sudbury or Timmins. It's even worse in the winter months: 40 degrees below zero. People can't stay outside and sleep on a grate because frankly there ain't any grates warm enough to stay on, and quite frankly they wouldn't survive the night.

The Good Samaritan Inn has been surviving on hand-outs from individuals within our communities, out of their kind generosity and that of the corporate sector, in many cases, who have assisted them in paying some of the big bills that they've got to pay in order to keep a building like that going. They've been looking at this government and saying, "The government says there are poverty initiatives. The government says they are going to do something in order to assist those people who are

most in need in our society.” They look to the province to assist with helping them pay some of the costs that it takes to keep that Good Samaritan Inn operating. And there’s nothing there. There are no provincial programs to assist the Good Samaritan Inn. We’re working now, trying to see if we can classify the city of Timmins under the current guidelines to make that happen. But I will tell you, it’s a real uphill battle. So I say to the government across the way, all kidding aside, you could talk a good line when it comes to poverty, but when it comes to your actions, I look at what happens and I say you’re not anywhere near the mark.

I look at people on ODSP. My own sister is on ODSP; she’s schizophrenic. She and her friends are surviving on dollars that are barely enough to get by. They’re having to make the choice—many of them. My sister is lucky because my mother is still alive. My mother takes good care of Louise as far as making sure that her needs are met even though she lives in a group home, and assists in any way that she can, and so does the rest of the family. But most people don’t have that, and are having to decide, “Do I buy good food this week or do I buy macaroni and cheese? Do I make sure that I have the type of food that I need today or do I disconnect my cable and my phone?” Those are the kind of choices that they are having to make. The quality of life starts to diminish, which perpetuates the problems when it comes to the person’s own physical and mental health.

I say to the government: If you want to do something concrete, let’s be serious about ODSP rates and bring them to a level that makes some sense and allows people not to live in poverty. That’s not to say anything about people who are seniors who are having to retire early because they are unable to work for whatever reason, or having to survive on pretty meagre pensions out there, especially single women or men who are not married, living alone. It is really, really a tough go.

Je dis au gouvernement : vous avez une responsabilité de vous assurer que les plus démunis dans notre société ont la chance de participer dans le bien-être de la province de l’Ontario et de vous assurer que le monde a la chance de vivre et d’avoir une certaine dignité dans cette vie-là. Quand je regarde le gouvernement dans le discours du trône et je regarde ses actions, je vois que les deux ne se balancent pas—un dicton un peu différent sur les actions qu’on voit entre ce qu’on dit dans le discours du trône et ce qui est vraiment fait quand ça vient aux actions du gouvernement.

I appreciate that my good friend the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is here, because that’s the other thing—the government has said, “New relationship: We’re going to end what we have seen for years when it comes to how First Nations have been treated or not treated in the province of Ontario.” I heard that after the election and I thought that maybe the government was being serious, because both my leader Howard Hampton and I, New Democrats, have been coming to this Legislature over and over and over again talking about the abysmal failure of the federal government in dealing

with our First Nations and reminding the province that it has a stake, that the province pays for much of what are services in First Nations communities.

For example, health care now, after the integration of the Weeneebayko hospital in James Bay, will be entirely in provincial jurisdiction, entirely run by the province. The welfare system is run by the province; all of the policing is run by the province; the courts are run by the province. The children’s aid society service on-reserve and off-reserve is paid for by the province. Most of the services that people utilize as they do in other communities in First Nations are provincial, both funded provincially and under the legislative authority of the province of Ontario in the Legislature.

The government said, “We’re going to have a new relationship.” You know what? I applauded that. I said that it’s about time. It’s about time that the province of Ontario and the Premier stand up and say no to what has been going on for the past 100-and-some-odd years when it comes to how we treat First Nations and yes to changing the relationship. But I look at the changed relationship. Let’s look at the record since the last election. The government could have done a couple of things very quickly in order to send a really strong signal that in fact we are being serious about changing this particular relationship.

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Let’s look at the situation in KI. That reserve had Platinex, a mining exploration company, come onto its territory without their permission and do exploration, contrary to what the Supreme Court has said when it comes to the right that individuals have within First Nations as a whole to be consulted, and that the province of Ontario has a role to ensure that the mining company goes in and actually consults with the First Nations. They went to court, and at the end the court said that the government of Ontario was wrong in not ensuring that those rights were maintained and protected as per previous court decisions.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Wrong.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I’m interested to see that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs says I’m wrong. Go talk to Donny Morris, who’s in jail today. The government says that they want to have a new relationship with First Nations? How are you going to have a new relationship with First Nations when the action of the government is to throw the band leadership in jail?

I just say: Listen; if we’re going to have a new relationship, let’s be serious about how—there’s not a First Nation, I want to say upfront, anywhere in northern Ontario that I know of that doesn’t want a mine in its backyard, that doesn’t want to benefit from forestry, that doesn’t want to benefit from hydroelectric projects. They understand that those types of projects should be of benefit to their communities, as they are for every other community. But what they’re saying to the government and to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is that we have to ensure that there are rules when it comes to how this happens on our territory, that not only do we need to be

consulted; we also need to work in partnership with the province and make sure that these things are done in some way that benefits the communities, not just when it comes to revenue sharing but also when it comes to the whole issue of what's important to them as far as how the territory or the ground needs to be respected when it comes to aboriginal values. Instead, this government says that we have a new relationship. And what's the new relationship? We've got Donny Morris and four of his councillors in jail. I guess that's a new relationship.

I look at NAPS, Nishnawbe-Aski policing. If you look anywhere in the province of Ontario, be it the Ontario Provincial Police or local municipal police such as in the city of Toronto, Sudbury, Timmins or whatever, you have a Police Services Act that says that a police station will have such-and-such services, making sure that everything from fire suppression to smoke detection to the size of cells has to be done according to code, and that you have to have a certain amount of police officers in order to do the job of responding to the needs of the community.

Well, here we've got NAPS, Nishnawbe-Aski policing, which does policing on NAN territory, the Nishnawbe, which is all of Treaty 9 in northern Ontario. They came down here to Toronto to meet with the minister, and they said, "Listen, for 13 years we've been trying to negotiate between the federal and provincial government an agreement that ensures that we have similar police services in our communities." I'll tell you what happens now. A woman calls at 4 o'clock in the morning to report a domestic dispute in one of our communities: Either somebody doesn't answer the phone, or if they do, nobody comes. You know what's going to happen? Somebody is going to get killed. It's as simple as that.

Go talk to Ignus Gull in Attawapiskat. I just got an e-mail from him yesterday, during the weekend, talking about an incident that happened in Attawapiskat, where young vandals were vandalizing a house and the vehicle out in front of it. They called the police at 4 o'clock in the morning, but there are not enough police officers in the community—they're short-staffed—and nobody came till 11 o'clock the next day, after all the damage was done. Somebody could have been hurt. And what's the problem? Nishnawbe-Aski policing is not funded to the degree that they need to be. If you had the city of Toronto funded the way that NAPS is funded today—that would never be allowed to happen, because it would mean to say that they would not be able to do their jobs. If the people of the city of Toronto didn't see the police when they called in a reasonable amount of time, Mayor Miller and the rest of council and this Premier and the Solicitor General would have a lot to answer for.

What's the difference? Why are First Nations, when it comes to policing, treated like second-class citizens? It's not me saying this. This is Grand Chief Stan Beardy himself, who says, "We are treated as second-class citizens." If you live in the city of Timmins or Toronto and you have police services, you can be guaranteed that there's a level of service that will be provided in order to

ensure, as much as humanly possible, your safety; that if you pick up the phone and you call the police, there is a sufficient amount of officers to be dispatched; that the equipment they've got is second to none; and that they've got the support services back at the police station to assist them.

Well, here's what happens when you call from Marten Falls or you call from Kashechewan—even a better story. If you call the police from Kashechewan—first of all, they're not in a police station; they're in a trailer—there's not enough police officers. They're probably about 20% of the force, which means to say you can't cover policing 24 hours a day, which means to say, when you call, sometimes nobody answers the phone and they have to dispatch it back to Thunder Bay. And what does somebody do when—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was going to get to that. What does somebody do when they answer the phone in Thunder Bay when somebody from Kashechewan calls? God only knows. So what do they do? They call Jonathan Solomon, the chief, and they say, "Come and do something." So the chief and council have to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and try to deal with whatever has to be dealt with in their community when the police aren't there to do it. It's not that NAPS doesn't want to; it's just NAPS can't. They don't have the funding.

So they come down and they meet with the Solicitor General. They said, "Here's what we want you to do." The capital and operating requests, in order to bring our police services up to a certain standard, are \$26 million; the province of Ontario is responsible for about half of the cost. I went into that meeting fully expecting, with the new relationship, that the government would cough up its 48% of the \$26 million. What's the answer they got? Mr. Bartolucci says, "We'll work with you to convince the federal government, and if the federal government does something, then we'll kick in our money."

Excuse me; the federal government has been asleep at the switch for the last 100 years. Why would you wait on them? Being government is about leadership, so you step forward and you say, "Here's what we're prepared to do." I expected him to say, "Here's our share of the money, and let's work to make sure that the feds match." That's what we should have been doing. That would have been a signal that we could have given to First Nations to say that maybe there is a new relationship.

So I say to the government across the way and to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: In the throne speech there was some really good language. I saw the press releases. You talk about having a new relationship, but from where people sit in their communities there's nothing new about this relationship; it's a continuation of what we've had for many, many a year.

I want to turn to another issue: the issue of long-term care. All of our communities are facing the same thing. The demographics of our communities are, by and large, that there are a lot more people who are in need of long-

term care for various reasons. One, we have an aging population because we've gotten very good at health care and we've gotten very good at health promotion—look, even a guy like me is losing weight—so we're living a lot longer. I know for some of you that might be a problem, but for me it's good news. The point is that we're living longer, but when we do get ill, we get really ill and we're in need of services either in the community or, unfortunately, sometimes within long-term-care facilities. Across this province we have the same problem: We have long-term-care facilities where staff are being run off their feet in order to be able to do their job. They've been saying to this government, not just since the election but before the election, that we need to make sure that we have a standard of care that equals at least three and a half hours per resident so that we can do the jobs that need to be done to care for these people in the homes.

Like my good colleague our health critic Madame Gélinas, I go into the Extendicares, the Golden Manors, the North Centennials or the Foyer des pioniers and it's the same story: Staff are working hard, they're really trying to do what they can, but unfortunately they don't have the coverage. I was at one of the homes in Kap, I forget if it's Extendicare or North Centennial Manor, and there was one person who was working in the Alzheimer unit, and there are two separate hallways. So if she's busily working with one person who happens to be in a crisis of some type, she has no way of monitoring what's happening on the other hallway. So how are you able to make sure that people are cued to go to the bathroom? That's what you do with Alzheimer patients in the early stages. You don't have to put incontinence products on them. You cue them to go to the washroom. But if you don't have the staffing to do that—yeah, Minister Smitherman tried to make fun of it, but that's where we end up. So I say to the government: You talk a really great line when it comes to what you need to do in the throne speech, but when it comes to action, I don't see this government moving on the 3.5 hours.

The other issue is the number of beds we have in long-term-care facilities. Where I come from, we have the Timmins and District Hospital. About 60% of the people in our hospital are alternate-level-of-care patients—ALCs, as we call them in the jargon. That means to say, these are people who ended up in the hospital in crisis, should be in a long-term-care bed, but we don't have the long-term-care bed to put them in. So what do we do with them? We keep them in the hospital and we call them ALCs. But 60% of our hospital is filled with ALC patients. What does that mean? It means that when you bring your child to the hospital because they broke their arm, you have to wait longer at the emergency because there is no place to deal with them. We're taking patients and putting them in beds and cots in the emergency department of the Timmins and District Hospital.

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I've been in the hospital a number of times. Unfortunately, my mother-in-law has not been very well as of

the past couple of months, and I've had to go to the hospital quite a bit. Plus, I get all the constituents calling the office and wanting to meet with me on this issue. We're trying to implore the Minister of Health to make sure that we are able to build beds within the city of Timmins so that we can properly take people out of ALC beds and move them over to long-term-care beds and long-term-care facilities. It makes sense financially but, more importantly, it makes sense for the patients, the residents who have to live in those places.

I say to the government—and I'll just wrap up on this—that, as I said in the beginning, if you listen to the speech, it's a good one. Boy, you guys can talk a good line. But when it comes to measuring up what this government has done and what it intends to do on the issues that you outlined in the throne speech, I don't see a lot different than what we saw before. I see First Nations that have been told they're going to get a new relationship, and they see the relationship staying the same. We see poverty in this province not being dealt with seriously. Yes, we've got a minister responsible for poverty, and we have, apparently, a war on poverty. But all I know is, when I talk to people in our communities, they don't see the difference when it comes to the day-to-day parts of their lives. When I look at long-term care and I look at the services that people need in our communities to make sure that they're able to live in independence and if, God forbid, they've got to go into a long-term care bed, it's there for them, not much has changed.

I say to this government: If you really believe in what you say in your throne speech, you should be bringing legislation that deals with this stuff concretely and ensure for us that in fact you're going to do what you said you did. Up to this point, I don't see that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'm just going to respond to the part of the member's remarks with respect to aboriginal affairs. The member says he doesn't see any change in the relationship. I'm wondering where the member has been for the last few months. I'm wondering if the member is aware of the fact that this government entered into a 25-year, \$3-billion agreement to agree on First Nations' and this government's management and sharing of revenues. It meant \$200 million going into the bank accounts of First Nations across this province a month ago. It was an agreement that the NDP government never entered into. In fact, they botched it up so much that we had litigation in February of this year that had to be forestalled as a result of this agreement.

Did the NDP government resolve the Ipperwash land claim to avoid the 1995 confrontation? Remember that summer of 1995 confrontation between the Harris government and people who were protesting for their rights on Ipperwash park? That happened right at the heels of the failure of the NDP government to do anything about that land claim.

What did this government do within, oh, I think it was six weeks of us taking office for this term? We in fact

said to Chief Bressette, "You, if you wish, jointly manage the park"—Chief Bressette said, "That's exactly what I want to do"—"at the end of which you get title to the park." Boom, solved; six weeks. That's the new relationship: Ipperwash park now going back to its rightful First Nation.

Did this opposition lift a finger to contribute to the solution of what was happening in KI and Ardoch? Did they do anything to offer a solution? Did they go to the community to try and offer a solution? No, they didn't. All they did was dump on the government's efforts to try and find a solution. That's not leadership at all, but it won't deter this government from continuing to build on its improved relationship with First Nations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back. I wanted to thank the member for Timmins-James Bay for his spirited comments. That's one thing we can always count on from him: bringing the perspective from his constituency to this chamber.

I want to pick up on something he mentioned, which appears to be a province-wide crisis in long-term care. We remember, as our new colleague from Nickel Belt pointed out, that the Liberals had told us they were going to revolutionize health care back in 2003. Then what did they do? They placed a little bit of bureaucracy in the way of hospitals. We have now got a crisis in my own city, the city of Ottawa, where there is bed blocking going on; surgeries are being cancelled and we are short approximately 250 long-term-care beds.

There has been no acknowledgment by this government that there needs to be more private investment into the public delivery of health care so that we can actually free up those beds. There has been no acknowledgment by this government that we must assist seniors in staying in their homes longer, whether that's through additional recreational facilities or whether or not it's through other programming they can take advantage of. It's working with our veterans to ensure that those people who fought for our freedom so that we have the ability to stand in this chamber are given the respect they need to stay in their homes that much longer.

As I end on this note, I again want to congratulate my colleague. It's wonderful to see him back here in the 39th Parliament. I look forward to discussing other matters of great importance that are shared among many of us here in this chamber throughout our various ridings. Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to congratulate my colleague Gilles Bisson for his comments on the throne speech. Certainly some of the key issues that he talked about are issues that I may be talking about also, with maybe more of a focus as to what it means in my riding. But at the core of what he was talking about was really the lack of action. A throne speech is just that: words. Words don't put food on the table for the poor; words don't put a roof over your head if you're homeless;

words don't help you get a job if you are unemployed. They are just that.

We need leadership. We need a government that goes from words to action. He has clearly demonstrated that the government we have in place right now is heavy on words, very light on action. That doesn't help the people of Ontario. The examples that MPP Mr. Bisson has brought forward are all examples from his riding that would apply just as well in my riding. Thank you for bringing this forward.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance to stand up, speak and comment on the speech of my friend the member from Timmins-James Bay.

I was listening to him, and it seems like he didn't read the throne speech very well. He commented on a small part of it. We are lucky the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs answered and explained it to him. Hopefully, this issue has been clarified for him. We have a good relationship with aboriginals in this province of Ontario, and a good indication is that we have a minister in charge of that area in order to patch up and open a new era in the relationship with the aboriginal people in the province of Ontario.

Also, he didn't talk much about our commitment to education. He didn't talk much about our commitment to health care. He didn't talk much about our commitment to attract new jobs to the province of Ontario. Our government—

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm going to have a good chance, hopefully at the end of this day, to speak for more than 10 minutes in support of the throne speech. I will talk in detail about what's in the throne speech and why we are proud of it as a government, because this throne speech and this government action in the province of Ontario create a lot of jobs. I will give a lot of examples when I get the chance to speak in more detail about the throne speech.

The opposition always brings negative points to the throne speech and to our government action. Thank God, anyway, that we don't have the Conservatives in power; otherwise, we would privatize the whole of health care, as the member from Ottawa was saying a few minutes ago. At least we have a little bit of a difference with the NDP, but still we share our agreement on public health care and public education. Despite the little differences between us and them, we are realistic. We have a realistic approach to issues. We're trying to work it out in order to have a good province and a successful and prosperous province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins-James Bay, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would just say to my good friend, yeah, you have a commitment when it comes to public health care: It's called private hospitals. We now finance the construction of hospitals with private dollars, and they're costing way more money than it would cost to do it under the public sector. So I ain't going to take a

lecture on what is public and what is private from my good friend.

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I just want to say to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, I thought it was really kind of interesting that he basically tried to blame the win tax issue, which is the revenue sharing on Casino Rama, on the former NDP government. I thought that's really interesting, that's pretty rich, because we had committed that they get 100% of the funding. That was the deal. They get one casino, we get to build Windsor; we get to build Niagara Falls and they get Rama at 100%. It was the former Conservative government who put in the win tax, and this government dragged its heels for over four years, couldn't get to an agreement and finally was embarrassed into a position by the First Nations. My hat's off to the leadership of the First Nations communities, who browbeat this government into finally doing something that was a bit of a saw-off on what the 100% should have been and where they ended up.

Then the best one: It's the NDP's fault that Ipperwash—that they called the police. I'm not going to get into this because my good friends to the right of me are going to get a bit upset, but that is really above and beyond the pale, for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs of Ontario to stand up in this House and to blame the NDP for having caused the situation in Ipperwash. Man, are you off the mark on that one—100%. It tells me two things. One is, the government has got an indefensible record when it comes to this new relationship with First Nations, and the second is, he's either flying off the cuff, or he's got pretty bad people working on his political staff briefing him as to what the realities are on the files that he's responsible for at aboriginal affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I will be sharing my time with the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I am honoured to rise today as the member for York South–Weston. I would like to begin my remarks by thanking the people of our riding for their support in the October general election, and I want to thank all of the volunteers who worked very hard during the election campaign. Their active participation strengthens our communities and safeguards democracy. I would like to acknowledge the contribution of my predecessors, Joe Cordiano and Paul Ferreira. I wish them well in their endeavours.

I am looking forward to working with all of my colleagues, and I am honoured to serve this House as a member of the Liberal caucus. The election of Premier McGuinty and the Liberal government in 2003 ushered in an era of positive change for our province. Last October, the people of our province gave this government a very clear and strong second mandate, and I want to assure the House that our government intends to keep Ontario moving forward by building on the accomplishments of our first term, guided by our vision of inclusion, fairness and co-operation.

Because I have undertaken the duty to serve the people of York South–Weston here in the Legislature of Ontario, let me share with you what the people in the many communities in this culturally diverse riding have told me they want this Legislature to know. In general terms, my constituents want us to think about their concerns and aspirations in equal measure. They want us to administer our collective resources to the best advantage for all and make sure no one is left behind. More specifically, they want to be able to work and provide for their families. They want an efficient and affordable public transportation system.

Again and again, people tell me how important it is to them that their children stay in school and have a chance at a better life, and so they ask that we in the Legislature help by properly funding and efficiently running our schools. They want more recreational and skilled training programs for the youth. They want us to create partnership with trades and the business sector.

They want to feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods. They want a healthier system that is efficiently run and properly funded, timely in its delivery of services and accessible to all. My constituents want our seniors to live out their lives with dignity by having access to services both in and out of the home.

The riding of York South–Weston is rich in cultural and linguistic diversity. We are a veritable mini-United Nations, and I know that our diversity is our greatest strength.

Yet York South–Weston has its share of challenges. Our riding has been affected by the migration of manufacturing jobs to the GTA and beyond due to the changing dynamics of global markets and the emergence of new technologies. That means that many residents continue to lag behind the economic growth and prosperity enjoyed by many Ontario communities. Small businesses are in need of revitalization. Many in our workforce are in need of retraining and must have access to these kinds of opportunities if they are to continue to be productive and self-sustaining citizens in the future. I know that, together, we can transform these challenges into real opportunities for growth.

My riding is home for many newcomers who want a fair chance so they may succeed, and they can succeed when they have access to adequate settlement programs, language training and child care, when their foreign trade and academic credentials are quickly and fairly recognized.

Our government's throne speech reflects our government's approach to governance and demonstrates that we are listening to the concerns of the people who live in ridings such as York South–Weston. Our Premier's vision is to lead our great province forward and to do it the Ontario way: by bringing people together, not ripping them apart with divisive politics but making this province stronger by uniting us in our common purpose.

Because we know how important strong families are to a vibrant society, we're investing in family literacy centres and expanding the successful Pathways to Edu-

cation program, which has already helped many more students graduate from high school. Our government is working towards implementing full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds. This will help young families and give our children a head start in school.

Because this government knows that we don't inherit the earth but, in fact, borrow it from our children and grandchildren, we're working hard to tackle the greatest threat to our environment: climate change. We know that by encouraging the development of green technologies we can help safeguard our ecology and create new jobs, which will continue to grow in numbers as we move forward into the third millennium.

Because we know that a healthy population is both happy and productive, we're making sure 500,000 more Ontarians will have a family doctor. We're tackling wait times in our emergency rooms, and we're making real progress; we're helping seniors who want to stay in their homes by broadening home care services; we are going to provide a caregivers' grant to those caring for elderly parents; and we are working on improving the level of care in long-term-care homes.

My mother, Maria Albanese, who is 78 years old, is in the House, and I would like to acknowledge her presence here today and thank her publicly for all that she has done for our family over the years. I believe it's important that all our seniors know that this government is committed to their happiness and well-being, especially as they approach their sunset years.

Because we want to ensure that all Ontarians have a fair chance at success, we are also helping our lowest-income families by building on the Ontario child benefit. We are adding a new dental program which will help those in need, and we have struck a cabinet committee in charge of developing a poverty reduction strategy.

Because York South-Weston needs our public transit system to be effectively connected to other parts of the city, because we need increased access to job opportunities, to local businesses, and because we need to reduce the burden on the environment, I was very encouraged by our government's release of the Move Ontario 2020 transit plan last August.

Three projects in particular—the Eglinton LRT, the Jane Street light rail proposal and the crosstown rail line connecting Weston Road to the Don Valley Parkway—are examples of transit initiatives that will help build and strengthen our community.

One transit issue has been the cause for significant community concern in our riding, and that is the air-rail link from Pearson airport to downtown Toronto. The original air-rail proposal was flawed; it called for the annexing of Weston, essentially closing streets that connect the very heart of the community. The proposal would have meant that a high-speed train would have ripped through the neighbourhood, tearing it apart at the seams, isolating small businesses. What's more, no stop was planned in the community. Such a proposal was asking too much of our community and would have been a hard sell for any politician.

The way I see it, if a train has to come through the Georgetown corridor it should stop in the community, and if the train stops in Weston it has to slow down, just as the GO train does now. That means that our streets will not have to be closed. Fortunately, the Ministry of Transportation indicated that if the air-rail link project selects this route, its preference is to have the train stop in the community, providing additional service to local residents and keeping Weston village intact.

I entered public service because I believe democracy requires active participation, and I know that the results of political action or inaction have a great impact on the lives of everyday people. I was born in a bustling seaside town in southern Italy called Taranto. My parents moved back and forth between Italy and Canada many, many times. As a young child, I remember having to adapt over and over again to new environments, different languages, different schools. Most importantly, I had to leave old friends and make new ones. So you see, I understand perfectly well what new immigrants feel when they find themselves in a new place, having to learn a new language and having to make new friends.

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Twenty-nine years ago, my husband, Germinio Pio Politi, whose presence here today I would like to acknowledge, and I came to Toronto to live here permanently. Our first apartment was in York South-Weston. We have stayed in the area ever since, raising our two children, Alexander and Charissa, in this multicultural community of communities. For 22 years I worked as newscaster and associate producer at CFMT, now OMNI television, Canada's first multicultural television station. I must say, along the way I sure made a lot of friends. Decades of successfully overcoming significant challenges in partnership with my colleagues and friends have confirmed for me what I have always known in my heart: That when we work together towards a common goal, everything is possible. I know that with courage, ingenuity and leadership, we can transform the greatest challenges into real opportunities.

In closing, I want to say that I am proud of our Premier's leadership and I endorse this government's vision for Ontario, a vision which fosters a strong and united society, a caring and compassionate society, a society in which hope wins over despair, co-operation wins over conflict and solutions are more important than partisan confrontations.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: As I rise for my inaugural speech to comment on the throne speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I would like to say it's an honour to be sharing my time with my new colleague the member for York South-Weston and to be surrounded by my friends from the McGuinty team.

The speech from the throne, *Moving Forward the Ontario Way*, lays out an ambitious plan for a healthier, greener, stronger Ontario, where there is opportunity for all. It provides a way forward for the people of my beautiful, vibrant new riding, whom I am privileged to represent.

Oak Ridges–Markham is home to people who have come to Ontario from every corner of the globe. One of the fastest-growing areas of the country, it is the largest constituency by population in Canada. It comprises parts of four former ridings previously represented by four current esteemed members of this House: the member for Markham–Unionville, the Honourable Michael Chan; the member from Newmarket–Aurora, Frank Klees; the member for York–Simcoe, Julia Munro; and the member for Vaughan, Greg Sorbara. Putting aside any partisan differences, at least for today, I know they have worked long and hard, each in his or her own way, to bring about positive change for their constituents and all Ontarians.

So what is my riding really like? I love to travel around my riding. I think of it as a microcosm of Ontario. We have a little bit of the best of all our province has to offer. From the farms, villages and towns of King and Whitchurch-Stouffville to the bustling suburbs, new urban developments and high-tech industries of Richmond Hill and Markham, we have it all. Our defining physical feature is the Oak Ridges moraine, with steep, forested ridges studded with granite boulders left by the glaciers, interspersed with deep kettle lakes and wetlands. Known as the rain barrel of southern Ontario, the moraine provides drinking water to over a quarter of a million people through wells. As it is also the headwaters of the rivers and streams that flow into both Lake Ontario and Lake Simcoe, it is the source of drinking water to millions. It is imperative that we ensure the purity of these waters, and I know that our government has committed to doing just that through the Clean Water Act and the Greenbelt Protection Act, passed in the last mandate, and, through our intention, as expressed in the throne speech, to introduce tough new legislation in this Parliament to protect Lake Simcoe and to ban toxic chemicals and the cosmetic use of pesticides.

In fact, it was the critical importance of clean drinking water that first led me to seek elected office. The tragedy of Walkerton, where people became sick and died because they drank polluted water, was an outrage in our province. The basic principles of public health were ignored, and I became convinced that we needed a strong, new government dedicated to keeping our community safe, and that I wanted to contribute all my knowledge and experience to that government.

People often ask me why I, a physician and long-time health administrator, would want to become a member of provincial Parliament. My answer is that I believe I can help people solve their problems. As a family doctor, I tried to assist my patients with their health issues on an individual basis. As the commissioner of health services and medical officer of health for York region, I was responsible to the regional council for the health of the community as a whole and for delivering essential public services. Now I intend to support my constituents in the same way as I did as a family doctor and as a medical officer of health—by listening to their concerns and advocating on their behalf.

Through the years, the touching and abiding faith of my family, friends and colleagues has encouraged me to

seek and obtain what I believe to be this very honourable duty—to represent my fellow citizens here, to engage in debate and, through our collective wisdom, to improve the quality of life of our constituents.

But how to do that? Well, the throne speech gives us the road map. In Oak Ridges–Markham, one of our most pressing needs is to improve our transportation networks. This government's Move Ontario 2020 plan will expand public transit dramatically into my riding. With the planned extension of the subway to Richmond Hill, the GO train to the Aurora Road in Whitchurch-Stouffville and the transit terminal in Cornell in Markham, we will allow people to get home sooner so that families have more time together when the work day is done.

We also know we have more work to do to improve health care. One paramount requirement is to tackle wait times in our emergency rooms. The Markham Stouffville Hospital needs expansion of acute care, mental health, diagnostic and emergency room services—and this I am committed to ensuring.

Our seniors have contributed throughout their lives to our great province, and now it is our turn to ensure they age at home for as long as possible in dignity and comfort through expanded home care and grants to their family caregivers, as required.

As a public health physician, I'm particularly proud of our recent introduction of legislation to make healthy eating a reality in school cafeterias, and the creation of the Ontario fitness challenge program to fight childhood obesity. In my own riding, with so many new, ambitious Ontarians, a system of public education is seen as the key to their own and their children's success. Our new textbook and technology grant for university and college students will help them get started each year.

We will strengthen the economy by keeping taxes competitive and investing in the education and skills of Ontarians while fostering relationships with businesses and labour to create more well-paying positions of employment. And we will be doing this in a fiscally responsible way that allows labour markets to adjust.

Many people assume that my riding is extremely affluent, and based on average income that may be true. However, an average can be misleading as it does not show the range of incomes from which it is calculated. There is definitely poverty in my riding, as I saw first-hand going door to door last summer and fall. By building on the Ontario child benefit with a new dental program to help those who need it most and by developing a poverty reduction strategy, we will ensure that all the residents of Oak Ridges–Markham have more opportunities to succeed.

Since the election, I have had the good fortune to attend many events in my riding. Each one has taught me new things about the people in my community, including how many wonderful volunteers are contributing to the richness of our lives in Oak Ridges–Markham. One memorable event was the opening of the Little Rouge Public School in Markham. The excitement of the kids and their families, the teachers and staff was obvious as I

came through the doors. The auditorium was packed with people from all over the world. You could hear a pin drop while the children performed songs from their countries of origin as well as European classical music. These kids told us of their hopes and dreams through verse and affirmation of why character matters.

The local councillor, a third-generation Canadian, described to us how this corner of Markham looked when he was a boy, playing in the creek with his friends. As the town of Markham's motto states, we remembered our roots while looking forward to the future. We shared in one of the loudest and most heartfelt renditions of O Canada I have ever heard. These are the people it is my honour and privilege to serve.

We look forward to our government's assistance in continuing to flourish and move ahead as a community. I am positive my fellow members would agree that this is why each of us wanted to become part of this House, be it in this election or years past, as in our heart of hearts we want to assist, to serve and better the plight of others.

As a new immigrant to Canada, I heard the words of Pierre Elliott Trudeau that Canada must be a just society, that we must have equal opportunity for all. These principles will be my guide during my time in this Legislature. The McGuinty government has made considerable progress over the last four years, but we have more to do, as is so well laid out in the throne speech. I am proud to be here so we can move Ontario forward together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier):
Questions and comments?

1650

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the members from York South-Weston and Oak Ridges-Markham on their comments on the throne speech. I'd also like to congratulate them on their election wins, and I wish them well in the Ontario provincial Legislature.

There are a couple of things I wanted to comment on, though. The one was from the member from York South-Weston, her comments about what she considers to be the success of more people in Ontario getting a family doctor. I can tell you that I don't buy into that for one second. In fact, I'm finding in my riding—and I've talked to a lot of people from different parts of the province—that this is an epidemic that's much worse than we first thought. Yes, there are new doctors being trained and they're graduating, but the problem is that we're not catching up to the ones who are retiring. I can tell you, in almost every community, when you talk to constituents or to individuals in that community, it's a question that, as I go out in the riding on community events, I'm finding I am asked far more than I have ever been asked in the past, and that's: "How do I get a family doctor?"

If there are 500,000 more people or whatever it is that they are talking about who are seeing a family doctor, then it's not happening in central Ontario. All of our communities have very strong physician recruitment committees, and we're not seeing anything being let up on that. I want to point out that the government talks a

big story as far as saying that the family physician recruitment is working, but it's not working in central Ontario, and I can tell you that for sure.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm having a bit of a fight with my chair here.

I want to congratulate both the members for what are their maiden speeches. I want to congratulate them first of all on their election to this Legislature. This is a pretty elite club that we have here, as sometimes we refer to it. A lot of people have tried unsuccessfully over the years to come and represent their constituency here in the Legislature. A few of us every now and then get an opportunity to be lucky enough to be elected. Some of us here are even luckier to get re-elected after we've been here for a while, and that's really the test.

I just say to the members: I know you come here with all the right intention of doing what needs to be done, but at the end—and I don't mean this to try to take a knock at you, because it is your maiden speech. A lot of what was said in the throne speech, I can understand, warms the heart when it comes to somebody who believes in some of the issues that have been talked about. But the real test is going to be on the measure of it that we're able to deliver. This is where the two members who spoke previously could be of assistance in making sure that, not just at caucus meetings and discussions that we're having amongst ourselves privately but also publicly, when need be, they say, "Hey, maybe we haven't done enough to challenge this Legislature and to challenge the government to do what is right."

Yes, we all got elected on the label. I got elected as a New Democrat, the two previous members who spoke got elected as Liberals, and we represent our political parties. I understand that. But at the end of the day, we're here to represent the people. Sometimes we need to rise beyond just the partisan politics that our parties sometimes bring.

If I can give you two things in your maiden speeches, I would say, "Well done." I thought you brought an eloquent voice to what you had to say about your constituencies. I congratulate you for bringing your families, because far too often that's the big sacrifice we make around here. I look forward to working with you on these files over the next number of years.

Mr. Mike Colle: I also would like to offer my congratulations to our two new members who gave their maiden speeches: the member from Oak Ridges-Markham and the member from York South-Weston. I think the people of those two ridings and the people of Ontario are very fortunate that accomplished, professional women like the two members offered to sacrifice a lot of family time to run and represent their ridings. I know the member for York South-Weston had a distinguished career as a professional broadcaster for many, many years—very well known, very compassionate, very knowledgeable, with an outstanding community reputation. The member from Oak Ridges-Markham was a family physician, the medical officer of health for York region. Again, both have proven professional standards and contributions they'd been making in their commun-

ities for years before they came here. I think it really bodes well for the future of this Legislature that people of that calibre have chosen to run and represent the people of those two ridings, and I think they'll do a terrific job, given that they already have a proven record of community contribution.

That's why I think both of them will stand up and be very clear for their constituents when they say, "Why should an unemployed Ontarian not be eligible for federal EI benefits?" Over 70% of the people out of work in their two ridings cannot get federal EI and can't get the federal training programs, and then, to boot, the people in their ridings are paying more taxes to the federal government so they can have lower taxes and equalization clawbacks they give out of Ontario's money to the other provinces so the other provinces can have lower tuition for their students, lower property taxes, more services. Meanwhile, our unemployed workers can't even get EI, as the federal government keeps clawing money out of Ontario, at our expense, to help everybody else. What about our people?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to also rise to congratulate the members from York South–Weston and Oak Ridges–Markham. It's great to see your involvement. It's great to see your interest in bringing forward the issues that are important to your constituents. I hope that your voice is heard at the meetings and that you are able to bring forward many of the ideas that you raised in your speeches.

I'm particularly interested in—both of you mentioned the need for emergency room improvements. Of course, it is also something that I raised in my speech, because we do see what happens when people don't have family physicians. They are obligated, because they have no other options, to go to emergency rooms, and that does need to be solved, so good luck in your fight in bringing that forward.

The other issue that you both raised was the Move Ontario 2020 plan—again, a great idea in concept. It's unfortunate that we're having to wait 12 years for implementation. The concept is a good one, and it would be nice if it was moving forward faster, so I wish you well in encouraging your party to do that.

The member from York South–Weston: I give you a lot of credit for actually stating your mother's age. I hope she forgives you in the next week.

Congratulations. I look forward to working with you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: On behalf of my colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and myself, I want to thank all of the members who commented on our inaugural speeches, particularly the members from Simcoe North, Timmins–James Bay, Eglinton–Lawrence and Dufferin–Caledon—I'm still learning all of them.

I'm very proud to be here. Again, I want to thank my family, and I want to thank all of my constituents. I look forward to working very hard on their behalf, and I look forward to working with all the colleagues in the House, especially the ones who are part of our party, in order to

bring forward the voices of the constituents of our respective ridings and to be able to advocate on their behalf. I want to thank all the other members for commenting. I didn't agree with some of the comments that they made; I find some of them too negative. I think that most Ontarians have proven that they believe this government will continue to move the province ahead with the initiatives that were first announced in the speech from the throne on November 29 and reiterated by the Premier here today.

I must say that in the time since we last gathered here in the House in December, I have taken—as all of us have, I believe—the opportunity to be out talking to the people in my riding. The people of York South–Weston are already looking forward to the five-point plan for a more prosperous Ontario that our government presented in the throne speech, and we will all work hard to see that that will be delivered. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

1700

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased to rise to take part in the throne speech debate today. I have to tell you that this time was originally allocated to Peter Shurman, but I'm sure a lot of people realize that Peter lost his mother last week and won't be in the House this week. I'm stepping in at the last minute to try to help out our caucus.

I did want to congratulate a lot of the new members today who have spoken. I know Ms. Jones from Dufferin–Caledon and the two recent speakers who've just spoken in the last couple of minutes. It's interesting to be in this House when you're a new member because it's the first couple of speeches when nice things happen to you; you are congratulated all the time. That won't likely happen again in the next four years. But I do congratulate all the new members. I believe there are 11 new members in the Legislature this year. I congratulate them all on their elections. Hopefully, we can all work together and make Ontario a better place to live.

I had a couple of congratulations that I wanted to say today. I mentioned in one of the statements earlier that the sport of curling is a huge sport in north Simcoe and in Simcoe county. We have been very blessed to have four great curling clubs in the area—the Ontario champions, both men's and women's this year, in Glenn Howard's team and Sherry Middaugh's team. I didn't get a lot of time to say this in the statement earlier, but these are incredible people who work in the community that supports the sport of curling. It's always such a positive group of people to be around. Not only are these the best curlers in the world and they compete on a world-class level at any given time, but they are just the greatest people to be around with fundraising events that they have throughout the year and how they help our hospitals and our fundraising campaigns.

I did mention earlier, and I will say it again, that Curl for the Cure is a fundraiser for breast cancer research. It was held a couple of weeks back in the Coldwater Recreation Centre. This group of people, on four ice

surfaces, raised \$25,000 in one day. Also, as I mentioned earlier, there's the Curl with the Pros program, where Glenn Howard's team and Sherry Middaugh's team and Wayne Middaugh's team, a group of people from across the province, came together to help the hospital foundations and their fundraiser, and they raised \$16,000.

One other thing I wanted to say on a very, very positive note is to congratulate this group of people. Up in the township of Tiny, in the village of Wyevale we have a couple of gentlemen: Kirk Hastings and David Price, both guys in their mid-30s. They represented Ontario for the first time at an event in Labrador called Cain's Quest. A lot of people have probably never heard of this, but this is a race across Labrador. Each team of two people have two snowmobiles, there are 29 teams entered, and they go 2,000 miles across Labrador with no trails. Their only way to function is with GPS. This team from Wyevale, Kirk Hastings and David Price, finished the race. Both snowmobiles have to cross the finish line, and with 50 kilometres to go, one machine broke down completely and they had to get a sleigh to load it on and to drag it across the finish line so they could compete. But the whole community is pretty proud of these guys. It's an endurance race, and these are pretty tough guys and they did a great job for Ontario. Again, it's the first team that we've ever had from Ontario that's entered this race.

One of the things that I wanted to comment on today with the throne speech—and it's a long throne speech so there are a lot of things we can actually discuss, but I can tell you that throughout this whole winter we've had a lot of bickering back and forth between the federal government and the provincial government. Nothing really ever changes. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you can recall when the Progressive Conservative Party formed the government in Ontario and there was a Liberal government in Ottawa. The same types of concerns were raised all the time. The chief whip of the opposition raised it earlier that no one was listening to Ontario over the employment insurance benefits. That's not a new story. That goes back 8, 10, 12 years for sure, and we just keep re-hashing that. It's a problem when you get an opportunity to blame a higher level of government or finger-point or whatever it may be. But we can look at the federal government—and I wanted to put this on the record today, and if I'm wrong, maybe someone can correct me. There are a number of things I thought we should talk about because the throne speech, on page 12, does refer to the federal government on a couple of occasions.

I want to make clear one particular area, the 1,000 cops program, because I'm critic for community safety. It's my understanding that two years ago Prime Minister Harper promised 2,500 new police officers for the country. Hopefully, some of those police officers will end up in First Nations policing. Because there's no question—the member from Timmins—James Bay mentioned it much earlier in his comments—that there is a real crisis around First Nations policing and we absolutely have to resolve that. So here's one area where some of those police officers can be used.

But it's my understanding that the federal government, as a result of their budget approval, and apparently the budget has been passed, is transferring \$156 million to the province of Ontario to spend as they wish over the next five years. If the provincial government will match funds with that, they could easily do 1,000 police officers over the next five years. That would also allocate 500 police officers towards the OPP as well. I think that any of us involved in the policing community all understand that the OPP have the statistics to back that they actually require another 400 to 500 police officers. So the 1,000 police officers that are coming from the federal government is a really good kick-start program for Ontario.

It's also my understanding that the government of Ontario has to make some kind of a public announcement by March 31, I believe, of this year that they will either buy into the program or they won't. So we'll be looking carefully in the budget next week and also to comments by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services as they move in that direction. I hope that we can build on that. As well, it's my understanding in talking to my federal counterpart and some of his colleagues—and I've met them on a number of occasions—that that would be open for review after five years. So after five years they may be able to renegotiate that and make it more sustainable into the future or maybe the province and the federal government wouldn't be able to agree on that.

1710

I heard a couple of times today in question period about how the province of Ontario has a \$60-billion infrastructure program. I'm assuming that's hospitals, schools, roads, sewers, water—whatever it may be. But I also know that for the last five months there's been an offer—this dates back to the budget of 2007 by the federal government—a \$3.1-billion offer for infrastructure for Ontario over a period of seven years. So that's \$3.1 billion over seven years. If you take the \$3.1 billion and multiply it by three—of course the provincial share being \$3.1 billion and the municipal share being \$3.1 billion because most of the COIP numbers work on that formula—that would be a \$9.3-billion investment in infrastructure as a result of the Building Canada program that we have apparently on the table; I'm told it's been under negotiation for close to five months. Although it isn't mentioned in the throne speech, as we use the throne speech as a basis for the budget which will be announced next Tuesday, surely the province of Ontario will sign on to that Building Canada program and actually get \$9.3 billion over seven years. That would make a great start to a lot of municipal infrastructure programs, and we wouldn't have to keep reannouncing things. We'd just have X number of dollars per year, totalling \$9.3 billion at the end of seven years.

That question was asked at the ROMA program. One of the mayors in my municipality actually asked that question to Minister Caplan. Quite frankly, the minister was not very polite at ROMA in how he responded to the question. He was blaming it completely on the feds.

Whoever's fault it is, we absolutely have to get that. There's no reason we can't proceed with that. We have to get negotiating quicker. Whether it's a federal problem or a provincial problem, there is \$9.3 billion in infrastructure at stake with that one program alone.

The other thing that's been announced by the federal government is the Community Development Trust, and that's \$1 billion from Canada for communities that have had hardships due to the loss of manufacturing jobs. My understanding on that as well is that the total for Ontario should be \$357 million, and it's my understanding also that the \$357 million has to be announced by the province of Ontario. I'm sure that if we listen to the loss of manufacturing jobs and how many communities have actually lost manufacturing jobs, I think you'll find that almost any one of our ridings would be happy to receive some of that \$357 million. My understanding is that it is to be announced by the end of March as well.

I'm thinking of communities like Windsor and Hamilton. We heard the numbers earlier today, but a lot of manufacturing jobs have been lost. I've had the closure of the Huronia Regional Centre in my riding—the Southwestern Regional Centre. These are government jobs that have been lost, but at the same time they're having an economic impact on the communities. So we definitely have to tap into that as well.

I'm hoping that this \$357 million will be announced—I'm told it has to be announced by the end of March for communities to be successful in that, and I look forward to that in the budget as well.

The COMRIF program was started by the current government in the last Parliament. The federal government has a \$65-million top-up program to that. That means they would call for another \$65 million from the Ontario government. So far, it's my understanding that the Ontario government has not signed on to that. So there's another \$65 million from the federal side, \$65 million from the provincial side and \$65 million from the municipalities. That would account to almost \$200 million in additional infrastructure that could proceed, but I'm told that the provincial government has not signed on to that, so now the federal government is actually moving ahead and making announcements on their share of that. I know that the town of Penetanguishene in my community just signed on for \$1.3 million on the Robert Street water treatment plant, but there's no way we can bring the provincial government to the table to match that share.

Another thing that the member from Oak Ridges—Markham mentioned in her comments was the importance of Lake Simcoe to herself. It's something that is very dear to me. I have 100 kilometres of Lake Simcoe shoreline in my riding. If there's one thing I want, it's for the water in Lake Simcoe to be clean. I have to give the federal government credit. They've put forward \$12 million over two years initially, in last year's budget, and now this year, they've just recently allocated another \$18 million over four years. So there's \$30 million of federal money at stake for projects around Lake Simcoe, but all we have so far from the province is a strategy around a Lake Simcoe Protection Act. In the budget next week,

I'm hoping the minister will come forward with matching funds for the \$30 million that the federal government has put forward under their national water strategy for projects around Lake Simcoe. I think that would be working together in a spirit of co-operation. I think there's no question that all of us in this House would want to make sure that Lake Simcoe was kept clean and enhanced as we move forward over the next few years.

The labour market agreement: I know that people are talking about training, colleges and universities. Effective April 1 of this year, there will be another \$311 million forwarded to the province of Ontario from the federal government for training, colleges and universities. I think we're all excited about that, because the labour market agreement was a long time coming. Now we've got this money that's coming, and we're hoping it'll help colleges, we're hoping it's going to help universities, and of course I really hope it's going to help the training aspect, with more apprentices, etc.

We have a big ratio problem that's going around in the apprenticeship programs, and a lot of the small business organizations are really trying to move forward with that. The reality is this: If you've got an electrician apprenticeship and you've got one employee—you're the journeyman electrician in your company—you can have one apprentice. If you want a second apprentice, you have to have an additional four journeymen. It's complete idiocy. It's a big mistake, and it has to be changed to at least one-on-one. Other provinces are just the opposite: For the second journeyman, you can have three apprentices. I think the government party is really tied into the construction unions and what they're requiring and what they're asking for and they're afraid to move on this. The reality is it's not good for small business people wanting to take on two and three apprentices if they would like to do so. At least bring it back to sanity and have a ratio of one-to-one.

Boy, the time's going quickly here.

The other thing I noticed, in the school section of the throne speech—"Ontarians sent a clear message this past fall: They want our children to come together, learn together and grow together." Can anyone explain to me why this government is going to allow this Afrocentric school to proceed in the Toronto District School Board? I've heard nothing good about it. You say right in your throne speech that you're against segregation, but the reality is you have a segregation issue.

On schools, Mr. Speaker, we've got a very, very serious problem. I'm sure some of the school bus operators in your riding have met with you. They're meeting with all of our ridings, at least. I've met with the Ontario school bus operators' association a couple of times. The price of gasoline is really hurting them badly. They can't pay. There's not nearly enough money flowing to the school boards for the school buses. I'm told that there will be very few new school buses purchased this year because there's just no money to purchase them, so we're going to have a lower level of school buses out there. The people who drive our school buses are some of the poorest-paid people in our society,

and they move, as you know, about 800,000 children per day to and from school. So the one thing we really want to key in on in the budget that's not mentioned in the throne speech is the fact that we absolutely have to have more money for the school bus operators so they can operate efficiently and can make some kind of a profit, but at the same time can make sure that we don't have a deteriorating transportation system for the children they move each and every day.

On top of that, I mentioned a little bit earlier in one of my comments the family physician problem. I think it is an epidemic. I'm hoping all the ridings aren't like they are in Simcoe county, because we are getting it. I can hardly go out to the grocery store without running into somebody who's asking me how they're going to get a family physician. So that is a huge problem. I consider it a high priority and, as I said earlier in my comments in the government throne speech debate, as we move forward we have to take into account the number of doctors who are retiring. There are a lot of doctors who are going to retire in the next five to 10 years, and I don't think that we're adequately replacing them.

1720

Overall, I look forward to hearing comments from other people on this throne speech debate. We haven't been here a lot in the House since June 6 last year, and I'm looking forward to not only the throne speech debate but also the budget showing positive things for Ontario. We have to address the loss of manufacturing jobs. As I said earlier, the priority is on the family physician shortages but also on all these other issues the government faces as well. I hope they can work better with the federal government. It's time to stop this finger pointing. Let's get working with the feds so that we can make sure that all of our tax dollars are put to good use no matter whether they're federal dollars or provincial dollars.

With that, I do appreciate the fact that I have been able to step in and help Mr. Shurman out today. I look forward to his maiden speech in the House. I believe it's sometime next week he will be commenting, and we will get a chance to compliment Mr. Shurman on his maiden speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank MPP Garfield Dunlop, from Simcoe North, for his comments on the throne speech. Some of the comments that I have a little bit more difficulty with are the blaming game that is happening between the Liberals in power in Ontario and the Conservatives in power in Ottawa. This is serving nobody well, and this has to be resolved.

He talks about how he cares about Lake Simcoe and wants a protection act to make sure that Lake Simcoe remains something to be proud of. In the south end of my riding, we have the French River, which is a real jewel of northern Ontario. It is just beautiful, and it has a protection act, but it didn't keep the Ministry of Natural Resources from hauling 100 tandem trucks and dumping loads of fill just beside this beautiful river that is

protected by a protection act. So all I have to say to you is it's nice to have an area protected, but that doesn't give you guarantees that your water is going to stay nice. We now have this huge dump of those 100 loads of fill that are brewing and steaming. The snow can't cover it—we don't know what is in there, but it keeps the snow from melting. It's making a big mess, and this big mess is going right into the French River, which is an area that is protected. Yes, it's nice to be able to have a protection act, but don't think that your problems will end there.

For the labour market agreement and for the colleges and universities, we agree that our college and university students need help. The debt load of our graduates right now is so high that a lot of kids don't go into college and university because they can't afford it.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I have been listening to the member from Simcoe North for almost 20 minutes. I thought he spoke and commented not on the throne speech but on the federal budget. He is talking about goodies in the federal budget, and he forgot about the throne speech, which outlined our vision for the next four years. There are a lot of good things for the people of Ontario, from education to health care, infrastructure, and retaining and attracting more jobs to the province of Ontario. I hope he joins our effort to convince the federal government to come to the table and support Ontario. I guess he didn't read the paper not long ago when the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, commented badly about the economy of Ontario. I was hoping he and his colleagues from the Conservative side will come to support us and convince Mr. Flaherty, who was a member of this House, to support Ontario and to know that Ontario is the engine of the whole country.

Due to our efforts in the province of Ontario, due to the vision of the McGuinty government, we in London-Fanshawe, in London, Ontario, attract a lot of jobs if people are convinced we can support them when they come to Ontario, if people are convinced we have a good education system, if people are convinced we have the best health care around. I know we are facing some difficulties in health care. That's why our government focused on health care, to try to correct it and put it in the right direction, because the damage was so great for a long time.

I hope the member from Simcoe North will join our effort and convince the federal government to come to the table to assist our universities and colleges, to assist us to train our people in Ontario to retain the jobs we have in Ontario, especially manufacturing jobs. It's just a thought.

It's good to talk, but it's very difficult to act. That's why we're asking the federal government not just to talk and to promise, but also to come to the table and deliver. That's what we're looking for.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments to the speech from the member from Simcoe North. As he just pointed out, he was filling in today for the member from Thornhill, whose mother passed away. So thank you, Garfield, for filling in today.

He started out, of course, by praising some community groups in his riding, so I thought I would take advantage of that to note some recent success in our communities, specifically in the community of Huntsville, which was one of the last two communities to be in the Hockeyville competition. Unfortunately, they came a close second to the other Ontario town that was vying for that, but Huntsville certainly has some terrific community spirit. Their junior A hockey team this year, the Huntsville Otters, was top of the league and did extremely well. I think they made it to the seventh game of their playoff series and lost in overtime, unfortunately. I was at that game, a very exciting game. They've also hosted the World Pond Hockey Championship for the last few years, outside at Deerhurst Resort. They've got a triathlon competition, and they're going to be holding a new event, the global Ironman 70.3, this September in Huntsville—so some tremendous community support and a lot of volunteers involved. Of course, in 2006, they also had the Paralympic Winter Games in Huntsville.

The member from Simcoe North touched on many different topics. I'd like to hit on a couple of them. First of all, he mentioned apprenticeships. That's an issue that's come up in my riding, where the rules in Ontario are such that if you have more than one apprentice, you need four journeymen for one apprentice. That's something that needs to change. I attended a skills breakfast put on by Georgian College recently and that was a topic that came up. I've met people who want to become apprentices and they can't because of these very restrictive rules. We have a skills shortage in Ontario. We need to change those rules. So that's something I would like to see this government do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Chair knows the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka didn't intentionally not mention the successful town for Hockeyville in Ontario, being Kingsville in the great riding of Essex.

Questions and comments? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, there certainly is a lot of crowing around here today, I must say. Congratulations to you all.

I say to the member from Simcoe North, it's interesting, because your comments raised the dander of the Liberal caucus, and they engaged in their favourite sport again. The member from Simcoe North knows well that if anything is happening in this province, whose fault is it?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The feds.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, it can't be the provincial government; it can't be Dalton McGuinty. It's got to be the federal government. So there we go again. Every time something is wrong in this province, it's always the federal government. I don't want to defend Mr. James Flaherty or Mr. Stephen Martin—Stephen Martin, that was good; it was a bit of a comedic theme there—our Prime Minister. God knows, I'm certainly not on the same side as them on probably 99% of battles.

The member is going to get an opportunity a bit later to talk about how the province has got a toolbox. When we did the Constitution in 1867—I want to point something out to all of you—the provinces actually had more power than the federal government to deal with the multitude of issues that face us here in Ontario. We're responsible for education, we're responsible for skills training, not the federal government. We're responsible for most of what happens in economic development. We're responsible for natural resources when it comes to mining, forestry and other industries. We're responsible for most of what happens in the province of Ontario, as far as the issues that face us. I just find it a little bit beyond the pale, quite frankly, to see my Liberal friends, who loved to stand up when they were in opposition and say, "It's Mr. Harris's fault. It's Mr. Forgetful's fault"—whatever his name was, the leader of the NDP at the time. But when it comes to them dealing with taking on responsibility, I say it starts with the first step: Admit you have a problem and then do something about it. I can't remember that guy's name; I've forgotten.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Simcoe North, the last word is yours.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from Nickel Belt, London–Fanshawe, Parry Sound–Muskoka and Timmins–James Bay for their comments and congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on that winning hockey town of Kingsville, Ontario.

Going back to the comments made by the member from London–Fanshawe: In my nine years here I've taken this federal-provincial conflict quite seriously and I try to follow it as closely as I can. I've asked a lot of federal members and people who are involved with the federal Conservative Party, "What have you put on the table?" Either you're wrong, or they're all wrong together. I've even been to a federal Ontario caucus meeting and all these things were discussed. There are a lot of things I mentioned that are on the table right now, like the labour market agreement. You're getting that money on April 1, and you can spend \$311 million more in post-secondary education. It's federal money. It's the COMRIF top-up money. You have not signed on to the COMRIF top-up money. That's \$65 million. The \$3.1 billion for the Building Canada program is on the table. You have not signed on the dotted line; other provinces have. The reality is that there is a lot of money out there. And here is the \$357 million for the community development trust. That's money for communities that are losing manufacturing jobs.

I suspect what's going to happen is that next week in the budget you're going to announce all of those things, all of those successful communities, and take credit for it. That's the problem: You don't want to give credit to the federal government. They've come out with good programs to help Ontario and you're not giving them any credit.

So it's a two-way street here. We both have to listen and we have to co-operate, but right now I'm believing the federal government ahead of you guys.

M^{me} France G  linas: The agenda that Dalton McGuinty has laid out in his throne speech fails to take real action that is needed on key issues facing Ontario's families. It cannot be supported. My constituents are looking for concrete action on key issues. They want action on poverty, on long-term care for seniors and people with disabilities, they want action on education, on manufacturing and forestry job loss, on northern prosperity, and on key environmental issues like climate change. This throne speech fails on all fronts: no manufacturing or forestry job strategy; no concrete measures like an immediate \$10 minimum wage to fight poverty—we did get 75 cents five months later, but that's it; no minimum standards of care for seniors in long-term-care homes; and promises on the environment that have been broken so many times that nobody can trust them.

A real, serious leadership agenda would include concrete measures to reduce poverty, to improve care for seniors, to fix our education system, to tackle the climate change crisis and to keep manufacturing and forestry jobs in Ontario. Words won't create or sustain one job. Words won't feed one hungry child, bathe one senior in a long-term-care home or reduce greenhouse gas emissions by one gram. Ontarians deserve more than just words.

Tous les jours, les familles de Nickel Belt demandent des actions concr  tes pour r  gler les probl  mes importants. On parle ici de la pauvret  ; des soins de longue dur  e pour les personnes a  n  es et les personnes handicap  es; on parle de l'  ducation, de notre syst  me d'  ducation; on parle des pertes d'emplois dans les secteurs manufacturiers et forestiers; on parle de la prosp  rit   du nord et des questions environnementales majeures comme les changements climatiques.

Ce discours du tr  ne   choue sur tous les fronts : aucune strat  gie en mati  re d'emploi dans les secteurs manufacturiers ou forestiers; aucune mesure concr  te, comme une hausse imm  diate du salaire minimum    10 \$ de l'heure pour combattre la pauvret  —on a eu un petit 75 sous, mais cinq mois trop tard; aucune norme de soin minimal pour les r  sidents dans les maisons de soins de longue dur  e; et des promesses relatives    l'environnement qui ont   t   faites tellement de fois que personne ne veut plus les entendre ni y croire. Un programme social vraiment s  rieux comprendrait des mesures concr  tes pour r  duire la pauvret  , am  liorer les soins aux personnes a  n  es, am  liorer le syst  me d'  ducation, s'attaquer aux changements climatiques et maintenir les emplois des secteurs manufacturiers et forestiers en Ontario.

Les paroles ne cr  eront et ne maintiendront aucun emploi, ne nourriront aucun enfant qui a faim, ne donneront de bain    aucune personne dans un foyer de soins de longue dur  e et ne r  duiront pas d'un seul gramme les   missions de gaz    effet de serre. Les Ontariens et Ontariennes m  ritent plus que des paroles.

The NDP has put forward positive solutions for this new session that would make a real, positive difference in the lives of everyday Ontarians. Dalton McGuinty needs to prove he is serious about running an activist

government by adopting these measures and passing them into law during this legislative session.

The solutions focus on key issues facing Ontario: job loss in manufacturing and forestry communities, poverty, long-term care for seniors, and key environmental issues like climate change. They are measures the government could adopt that would build a stronger Ontario and improve the quality of life for its people.

The practical measures include, first, an industrial hydro rate to sustain jobs and sustain communities that have been hammered by the loss of manufacturing and forestry jobs, while at the same time providing energy conservation and guaranteeing employment. Ontario has lost more than 200,000 jobs—good-paying manufacturing and forestry jobs—since Dalton McGuinty became Premier.

Second, we need a Buy Ontario policy that would sustain manufacturing jobs by giving preferential treatment to goods that are manufactured in Ontario. That exists in other jurisdictions. A member from my caucus, Mr. Gilles Bisson, has introduced a bill today in the House that would do just this for transportation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's me.

M^{me} France G  linas: That's you, yes.

We also need a jobs commissioner who would bring labour, management and government to the table to avert plant closures and job losses. It is too easy to close down a plant in Ontario. We have to make it worth their while to invest, to look harder to find solutions so that people don't lose their jobs and Ontario continues to be the economic motor of Canada.

We also need real action on the climate change crisis and to resume Ontario's traditional role of funding 50% of public transit operation and costs so cash-strapped municipalities that are struggling with the high costs of provincially downloaded services can freeze transit fares and get more cars off the roads—a quick and simple first step that would address the climate change crisis and the municipal funding crisis at the same time.

We also promote resource revenue sharing with First Nations that would allow First Nations to benefit from the natural resources they control. Ontario's First Nations, especially those in the north, in my riding and in MPP Gilles Bisson's riding, have access to substantial mineral and resource wealth, but the standard of living of many First Nations is about the lowest in Canada and the lowest in Ontario. The McGuinty Liberals need to start treating First Nations fairly, starting with fair revenue sharing so that they can benefit from the mineral wealth of their traditional land.

I want to talk about poverty. We campaigned on a \$10 minimum wage now to ensure that working people get a fair day's pay for a hard day's work. Currently, a person earning a minimum wage of \$8.75 who works 40 hours a week will earn \$18,200, leaving them \$2,600 below Statistics Canada's low-income cut-off for people in Toronto. This is if this person lives alone. But statistics also tell us that most people who work full-time on minimum wage are women and most of them have children. So not only are they below the low-income cut-

off for themselves, but it just gets worse and worse because they have to support their families on those poor wages. It just doesn't add up. No matter how good you are at budgeting, you are not going to make ends meet.

1740

Also, stop the clawback of the national child benefit supplement that takes \$1,500 away from the lowest-income family. Speed up the Ontario child benefit and open up more not-for-profit child care spaces to help the 345,000 Ontario children who live below the poverty line. Could you ever imagine Ontario being the child poverty capital? What a badge of shame to be laid on that government—Ontario, the child poverty capital. I can't believe it. But this government has let that happen, and this throne speech does nothing to change it.

We need more affordable housing to lift the 123,000 people languishing on waiting lists, trying to get rent geared to income. Over the last four years, the McGuinty government has created 3,000 new units. But did you know that out of those 3,000 new units there are only 285 that cost less than \$700 a month, that is, affordable for people on minimum wage and people on low incomes?

We continue to have hundreds and hundreds of homeless people in my riding, certainly in Sudbury. Member Gilles Bisson was talking about the Samaritan centre they have in Timmins and the hard time it has trying to find sustainable funding. We have the same thing in Sudbury; we have the Samaritan Centre in Sudbury. I used to be the director of the health centre and we ran the Corner Clinic. That was a primary care clinic for the homeless. When we first started offering services for the homeless, people would tell us, "There's no homeless in Sudbury. It's way too cold." Well, there is an average of between 350 and 370 people who are homeless in Sudbury, and God knows that in the last couple of weeks we had our fair share of minus 25, minus 30. This is way too cold. We had an episode of a homeless man dying of exposure to the elements right in my own riding, right in Sudbury. This is really hard to believe in a province of such plenty. But yet, we don't have a plan in Ontario to deal with homelessness. We have a plan to plan to deal with poverty. This is not the answer for the hundreds and thousands of people who are presently homeless, who are working for minimum wage trying to make ends meet, or who can't get a job altogether.

We also need a more ambitious public dental care plan to help the thousands of Ontarians who can't afford dental coverage. The proposed Liberal plan leaves huge gaps because it only covers low-income working Ontarians. The plan should cover all low-income Ontarians without coverage and all children regardless of their family income. When it comes to our mouths, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Government investment in dental care can save millions of dollars downstream in the health care system and in productivity.

Last spring, the NDP unveiled its comprehensive Ontario Smiles fair access dental plan. The plan aimed to provide preventive dental care for all Ontario children regardless of income, and for low-income families

regardless of their present employment status. Several months later, the Liberals promised a pale imitation of the same program, a plan that would not provide care for all children and would not provide care for all low-income adults. Furthermore, they've promised no timeline to introduce this program. But at the base of it all, why were our teeth excluded from medicare? No other body part was treated that way. But—

Interruption.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Oh, somebody is about to get into trouble. Somebody just lost their BlackBerry—not allowed to have that ring in here.

This is not fair. Lack of ongoing preventive dental care can lead to disease, pain and other complications that cost our health care system so much more in the long run. A recent study by Mount Sinai Hospital showed that dental problems were among the 10 reasons Ontarians visited our overcrowded emergency rooms.

Oral pain and disfiguration can prevent Ontarians from getting and keeping good jobs and further marginalize them in the community. Have you ever seen a homeless person with good teeth in Ontario? That doesn't exist. It just doesn't exist. Try to go for a job interview when you are ashamed to smile, because your teeth look so terrible, because you have not been able to afford dental care. This is not right, this is not the Ontario that I want and this is not the social inclusion that Ontario should work for.

Better health care for seniors: a minimum standard of 3.5 hours of hands-on care in long-term care that would reward our parents and grandparents who built Ontario with the dignity in retirement too many are denied. Without a minimum standard, seniors can be neglected, left in incontinence products way too long, develop bed sores, and face a number of social and physical difficulties. Without a minimum standard, family caregivers are forced to take on more and more duties in caring for their aging relatives.

We must also end this competitive bidding process for home care and implement a not-for-profit public home care system that covers everyone in Ontario. Granted, the Minister of Health has halted competitive bidding for now. We hope that the current competitive bidding model that has decimated the not-for-profit home care providers will be a thing of the past. It has compromised the quality of care provided to Ontarians and seriously undervalued and under-compensated those dedicated to providing home care. Ontarians deserve better. Rethink your competitive bidding system. They deserve to have their voice heard before any new home care model is introduced.

After the massive community opposition in the Hamilton area and the loss of two long-term not-for-profit agencies to provide home care services due to the McGuinty Liberals' insistence on competitive bidding, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, George Smitherman, finally halted the process. But Minister Smitherman gave no indication that the awarding of any new home care contract would be completely void of the competitive bidding process. Furthermore, they have

failed to consult with Ontarians to determine the home care model that they want. Ontario must eliminate the unstable and unreliable system of competitive bidding in home care that diverts public dollars away from patient care and into the pockets of for-profit companies. Ontarians deserve the highest standard of care delivered and the right provider as close to home as possible. They deserve assurance that the destructive competitive bidding process will not become the model used in their community.

We've heard in the media lately that the hospitals are having a tough time balancing their books. My colleague has talked about the situation in his riding where 60% of the beds in the Timmins hospital are occupied by alternative-level-of-care clients. Those are people that are not being well served. Those are people that need a more robust, publicly funded, high-quality home care system so that they can remain where they want to be, which is in their own home, rather than languishing in hospital beds where they don't receive the care they need. If they do need a long-term-care bed, then they should be assured of 3.5 hours of hands-on care, so that we treat them with the dignity they should have.

1750

In closing, we are supposed to be very happy that here in Ontario we have a Ministry of Health Promotion. Margaret Best is the Minister of Health Promotion. Here again, those are nice words: "We are going to invest in health promotion. We are going to try to keep people healthy." But at \$300 million, it is not even 1% of the health care budget. How can we take this government seriously when they say, "We want to keep Ontarians healthy. We want to invest in health promotion and disease prevention. We want to change the way we do things, but in order to do this, we will not even invest 1% of our health care dollars in health promotion"? It makes no sense. Here again, they are empty words that we cannot count on.

Ontario deserves better than this. Ontarians deserve better than this. For these reasons, we are going to vote the throne speech down.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Nickel Belt. I have high respect for the work she did before she came here working in community health centres. She knows of what she speaks, having that type of a real background.

But it draws me to an important point. I, along with other members, was here on November 29 when a litany of promises was made by the Liberal government. I'm a bit suspicious of promises by the McGuinty government and their type because their record is that they seldom keep their promises. But as we enter this new session, I will be a lot more encompassing in respect of, most importantly, the issue of health care. And the current issue in my riding of Durham is long-term care.

Let's go back here. In 2003, the McGuinty government promised a revolution, as you said, in long-term care. What do we have? We have Minister Smitherman

making fun of persons with incontinence problems. It's embarrassing to listen to a government that makes these promises, which we would all support in real terms, but then when it really comes down to it, they show disrespect for our seniors. This is the Minister of Health, in a news conference, making fun of seniors.

I and most members here have been to long-term-care facilities, and the campaign for additional supports is one that we should all be listening very hard to. Now, what we'll see here is another promise—the revolution that Mr. Smitherman was going to take. His action has been nothing. In the budget on March 25, we'll see what he has to say in real terms to the people of Ontario and, more importantly, to the seniors of Ontario.

So I commend the member from Nickel Belt on her comments, and I'll listen and wait attentively for the budget on March 25.

M. Gilles Bisson: C'est avec grand plaisir que je prends la chance de répliquer au débat de M^{me} Gélinas, membre de Nickel Belt. Elle a soulevé beaucoup de questions, puis j'ai vu dans son discours qu'elle a parlé d'une « issue » qui est pas mal importante pour moi : toute la question de ce qui se passe dans le système de soins de longue durée et dans le système hospitalier à travers la province, mais plus spécifiquement dans la ville de Timmins.

On sait que l'on a un problème présentement à Timmins parce qu'il n'y a pas assez de lits de soins de longue durée dans notre système local. Il y a beaucoup de monde qui ont besoin d'un lit de soins de longue durée et qui se trouvent dans les lits de l'hôpital. C'est un gros problème. Premièrement, c'est beaucoup plus dispendieux; on sait que ça coûte plus cher. Mais, deuxièmement, ce n'est pas la meilleure manière d'administrer un système de santé parce que les répercussions pour la communauté elle-même sont assez sérieuses. Si une personne se pointe à la salle d'urgences, la salle d'urgences est pleine. Pourquoi? Parce que le monde qui attend un lit, qui n'a pas un lit, est quelque part dans le couloir de l'urgence, ce qui veut dire que les « staffs » sont plus pressés et qu'ils ont moins de temps pour répondre aux besoins de ceux qui se rendent au système d'urgence à l'hôpital.

La députée a parfaitement raison quand elle dit que ce gouvernement a besoin de prendre d'une manière très sérieuse la question des soins de longue durée dans la province de l'Ontario—non seulement que l'on a besoin d'augmenter le niveau de services qu'on alloue à chaque résident à 3,5 heures chacun, mais on a besoin d'être capable de répliquer aux lacunes dans le système quand ça vient au manque de lits. Parce que ce n'est pas juste dans la ville de Timmins; on sait qu'à Ottawa, à Sudbury puis dans d'autres communautés c'est un peu le même problème. On a une communauté où le monde vit plus longtemps qui parfois a besoin de beaucoup plus de « support ». Si on n'avait pas ces lits-là pour être capable de prendre soin d'eux, ça ferait beaucoup de pression sur d'autres personnes qui font partie du système.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I was listening to the member from Nickel Belt when she was talking about the throne

speech, criticizing the efforts of the government to maintain jobs in the province of Ontario and create more jobs. I would invite the honourable member to come to London, Ontario, to see how our government works very hard to attract many jobs to the city of London.

Last week, we announced a company that's going to come from British Columbia called Original Cakerie. It's going to hire 400 people in London, Ontario, all because our Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs supported that initiative with \$2.5 million. There is another company from Korea, called Honwa, that's also going to open in London. All these companies are coming to Ontario because we provide something no other provinces provide to attract those companies to come and open: support in education, health care and financial support. I think it's a good indication of our effort, confidence in our economy and confidence in our government, because those companies wouldn't come and spend \$30 million or \$40 million—one of them, \$100 million—for nothing. They want to make money. We understand that. That's why they're coming to Ontario. They come to London and to many different parts of Ontario to open and invest in this province. I guess it's a great education for our directions and corrections for direction.

I would invite the honourable member to examine the throne speech, because it has a lot of good things in it: support for education, support for health care, support for seniors, support for infrastructure and transit and support for our environment. All of us in this House are working together to make sure we have a good province, a prosperous province that can support our seniors, our students, our children and also the needy among us.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I want to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt on her speech. As John said, she does know her business, and we certainly appreciate it when she does speak in the House.

I want to talk a bit about the Liberals and their broken promises. I know that seems to get people upset, but this happens all the time. Every time we get a throne speech, they tell us a lot of things and nothing happens. It was interesting too to hear the member from London talking about all the jobs they have in London. I'm wondering, did those jobs come from that new garbage dump they got down there? I'm wondering what happened to all those members in London when that happened. They all went and hid. Maybe they're bragging about the new jobs they got there. I guess if that's what they got in London, we could all go down and have a look at this new superdump they're going to get that the members just forgot about. When they came to defend their constituents, there was nothing there; they all went and hid. They made a deal, "Bring your garbage to London. Toronto, bring your garbage down there." I'm just wondering what happened to those members.

I guess we're discussing the throne speech. That's what we've been told here. The unfortunate part is that there's not a lot there for agriculture. I represent an area that has a lot of agriculture. While we appreciate the \$40 million that the province put out to our beef and pork

producers, grains and oilseeds, they forgot a whole section out there. There's a whole section of farmers that didn't get any money. Guys who started in the last couple of years who need money really badly to keep going were forgotten about. They got nothing.

This is really a concern that we have because we're trying to get new farmers into the business. Here we came up with a plan to help farmers and they forgot about them. There have been cases where one person got \$2 million, but the unfortunate part is that that person died two years ago. So these things are happening out there, and we're concerned about the throne speech.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nickel Belt, you have two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank MPP John O'Toole from Durham for his comments; mon collègue le député de Timmins-James Bay, Gilles Bisson; Khalil Ramal from London-Fanshawe. How did I do with your name?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It's okay.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci. And MPP Bill Murdoch from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

There certainly seemed to be a theme. Today in question period, I asked Minister Smitherman about his revolution in long-term care. Well, it has been anything but.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's no Fidel Castro.

M^{me} France Gélinas: No, no Fidel Castro; no revolution. But it certainly has an impact in the ridings of each and every one of the members of this Parliament. Something has to be done. We need the revolution. All the groups in long-term care are pointing in the same direction: We need 3.5 hours of hands-on care so we can bring back dignity to the residents of long-term-care homes. This needs to happen. There is an opportunity coming with the budget next Tuesday. It has to be in there.

Mon collègue de Timmins-Baie James a mentionné lui aussi les problèmes dans les soins de longue durée dans son comté. Quand on dit que 60 % des lits d'hôpitaux dans Timmins sont occupés par des clients qui n'ont pas besoin de soins hospitaliers, qui sont mal servis dans les hôpitaux mais pour lesquels on ne peut rien offrir de mieux, c'est pitoyable. Le ministre de la Santé nous parlait d'une révolution dans les soins de longue durée, mais il n'y en a pas eu de révolution. On en a besoin d'une. Tout le monde s'entend : on a besoin de 3,5 heures de soins, au minimum, par résident. Quand le membre nous parle de London, c'est une des communautés où on retrouve le plus gros taux de—London is one of the places that has the highest rate of unemployment. I certainly wouldn't put it as a shining example.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you to all. It being 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 1:30 of the clock, Tuesday, March 18.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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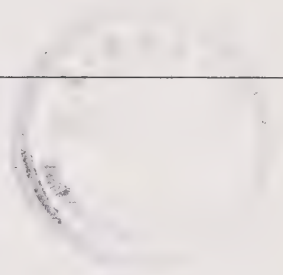
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 18 March 2008

Mardi 18 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 mars 2008

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Ms. Laurie Scott: On behalf of the members of the official opposition caucus, I want to extend a welcome to all the community leaders who are here in Queen's Park today to discuss their local community health centres. I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to meet with the four representatives in my office from Brock and Oshawa before I was able to come down to the House. I am also pleased to bring forward their message and to praise them for the good work that they have done in their communities. As the name suggests, it's very community-governed, and issues from the community are brought forward: access to health care, health promotion, health prevention and health wellness, just to mention a few.

The meetings between the community leaders and MPPs follow the news that CHCs will play a major role in the province's new poverty reduction strategy. That certainly deserves to be questioned, given that this government is hanging its hat on the CHCs, who are here today to point out that they need more resources to meet the promises made by the Liberal government. Nearly 51% of the CHCs promised by Dalton McGuinty are still not fully operational. Adding further to this is the fact that after nearly eight years, almost 25% of the 150 family health teams promised by the McGuinty government are not fully operational.

Community health centres are held together by the great work of our nurse practitioners as well as other health care professionals. I want to point out that it was the PC government that paved the way for nurse practitioners in Ontario. We continue to support their vital role and their increasing scope of practice in dealing with the needs and demands of the people in Ontario. And let's not forget that it was also a PC government that originally established the multi-disciplinary family health networks, working with the Ontario Medical Association, back in 1998. So, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal government, thank you very much for taking a good idea and re-branding it as your own.

We know that this is a Liberal government that is failing to provide our economy with the tools needed in order to be strong and work through those challenges.

We can't deny we have a serious problem looming, not least when it comes to the number of health care professionals we have in Ontario. Strengthening Ontario's economy—and this includes strengthening our rural communities, not omitting them—would give our health care system a much-needed focus: improvement of care for all Ontarians.

I want to commend again the work of the CHCs in all our communities. Especially in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, access to care through the CHCs has improved. We look forward to this government assisting them further.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to rise today to speak about the great work of the Association of Ontario Health Centres. AOHC is very fortunate to have Adrianna Tetley as its executive director, and Simone Hammond, their president, is even better than her predecessor.

As the past executive director of the CSCS—Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury—I know first-hand the positive impact of Ontario's community health centres, aboriginal health access centres and community family health teams, particularly for northern and rural communities.

These non-profit, community-governed, interdisciplinary organizations provide much-needed access to primary health care. They employ, on salary, physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, dietitians, social workers, health promoters and community development workers, to name a few. CHCs, AHACs and community family health teams provide programs and services based on the social determinants of health tailored to the health needs of the community they serve.

I encourage all members to meet with the representatives from AOHC who are here with us today. In particular, I encourage members to visit and view, in the front parking lot of this Legislature, the AOHC's mobile satellite CHC that was recently launched by the NorWest Community Health Centres. This travelling van serves as an example of innovation for northern and rural communities. Finally, I look forward to seeing all of you tonight from 5 till 7 in the dining room for the reception.

IRANIAN FIRE FESTIVAL

Mr. David Zimmer: It's a great pleasure to stand here today and tell you about an exciting event happening this

evening in my riding of Willowdale. Tonight, over 10,000 people are expected to attend the Iranian fire festival at Mel Lastman Square, complete with one of the best fireworks displays in Toronto. I'm pleased to co-host this event with my colleague Kathleen Wynne. It starts at 7 and runs through till 10 o'clock.

The Iranian fire festival is an ancient celebratory tradition dating back to the early Zoroastrian period. The festival is a prelude to the Iranian new year, which we will celebrate this coming weekend. It's known as Nowruz and it marks the beginning of spring. The celebration includes the ceremonial jumping over a large fire; that's something that I tried last year. It brings you good luck in the coming year.

The Persian community used to celebrate this event at Sunnybrook Park. They've since outgrown it. It has now moved to Mel Lastman Square to incorporate more people and many different cultures into the festivities. Although fireworks have replaced the bonfire-jumping, the spirit of the festival continues.

I want to wish every Iranian in Willowdale, in Toronto, in Ontario and in Canada "Nowruz mobarak"—that means "happy new year." I and all Iranians in the GTA, but especially in Willowdale, invite you cordially to attend the fireworks display tonight.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Ontario Legislature is finally back in session, having sat only two weeks in the past nine months, as the Toronto press quite rightly pointed out yesterday. While most opposition MPPs were busy working in their ridings, the McGuinty Liberal government was deliberately avoiding the scrutiny of the Ontario Legislature. It's no wonder, because the government lacks any comprehensive agenda to address the big issues and concerns facing Ontarians today. Instead they're trying to divert attention from the economic storm clouds on the horizon.

For almost three years now, our caucus has warned about the pending competitiveness crisis in manufacturing. Now it is here. The government ignored prudent warnings and now more than 180,000 people who have lost their good-paying jobs have paid the price for Liberal negligence. Two months ago, the finance committee undertook extensive public hearings and we heard what must be done in the upcoming budget. Our caucus pushed to eliminate the capital tax, reduce the corporate income tax, ease the regulatory burden and provide real tax relief for working families. In short, we need accountability, we need immediate and dramatic action, and we need it in next week's budget.

1340

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Pat Hoy: Ontario's economy is being challenged by the high dollar, the high price of oil and the slowdown in the US economy. The federal government missed an

opportunity to do more in its budget to strengthen Ontario's economic growth and to support agriculture.

Through the 2007 fall statement, the Ontario government has already taken significant steps to enhance the competitiveness of our provincial economy through a new \$3-billion economic stimulus package. This package includes a major tax cut for manufacturers and small businesses, new aid for farmers, funding for skills development and rapid re-employment services, and investments to renew essential infrastructure in both Chatham-Kent and Leamington.

Now, more than ever, both levels of government must work to enhance Ontario's competitive advantages and strong economic fundamentals as we compete for global investments, retain and create jobs, and assist our municipalities. The federal government must recognize the need for investments in Ontario's agriculture sector by providing their share of funding to strengthen risk management programs and help farmers, food processors and rural communities.

The Ontario government is here for our workers, our businesses and our farmers. It's time for the federal government to make needed investments today to strengthen Ontario's place in Canada and help Ontario families.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Norm Miller: With each passing day, the Premier reveals that he is more interested in photo ops than the state of Ontario's economy. Whether it's creating a new holiday at the expense of business or musing on parliamentary traditions like the Lord's Prayer, we see a Premier unconcerned with the economic conditions of this province.

Under the McGuinty government, Ontario has become one of the slowest-growing provinces in Canada and has reported growth below the national average since 2005, the longest string of underperformance in three decades. Ontario's growth rate in 2007 was the slowest in the country, with all five major banks ranking Ontario ninth out of 10 provinces for economic growth in 2008. For the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate exceeded the national average, rising to 6.5% in December 2007. Talented workers are leaving Ontario in record numbers, with a reported net loss of over 36,000 people to other provinces in 2007. That's the biggest out-migration in Ontario's history. Ontario businesses are desperate for apprentices in every discipline.

The McGuinty government must act now by:

- eliminating the capital tax for businesses immediately;
- reducing the corporate income tax rate to a competitive level;
- providing some tax relief for small businesses;
- setting and committing to real targets to reduce the red tape burden for all businesses; and
- developing a strategy to address the skilled labour shortage.

We as a province can do better.

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS OF CORNWALL AND AREA

Mr. Jim Brownell: Recently, an important anniversary was celebrated in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. The Women Entrepreneurs of Cornwall and Area marked 10 years of excellence in networking and providing opportunities for local business women. This organization, formed in 1998 by a small group of women who realized the benefit of creating a forum in which women entrepreneurs could network, has flourished. Within that first year, their membership grew to 80; it now stands at 115 active members from the riding and beyond. This anniversary was recently commemorated by the Power of Women Conference, which showcased the business opportunities in the community and drew in 125 attendees.

For a minimal annual fee, the Women Entrepreneurs of Cornwall and Area offer their members a variety of services, ranging from opportunities to profile businesses to a listing in the Cornwall and Area Business Directory. Most important is the opportunity to network and make the connections that are essential to a growing business. The group is recognized for its excellence in this capacity.

I would like to commend the founders of this group—Pam Baxter, Mary Ann Delaney, Alice Ferguson, Sharon Fisher, Marg Hogan, Sharie Rowland-Gaucher and Sue Tarle—for their vision and congratulate the group for 10 years of excellence. I know they will remain a strong force in the business community for many more years to come.

For those wishing to find further information about this group, I encourage you to visit their website at www.wecornwallarea.ca.

PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATIONS

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise in the House today to draw attention to the Conservative report issued yesterday by John Tory and the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook. The report stemmed from pre-budget consultations conducted by the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

I took a good look at the PC document, but unfortunately it's incomplete. For instance, in committee on January 30 the Conservative member for Wellington–Halton Hills stated that the McGuinty Liberals have “announced a strong commitment to attempt to combat the problem of poverty in Ontario.” I commend the member for a strong endorsement. Unfortunately, it wasn't included in the Conservative document released yesterday.

Also missing from the release was the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant's statement in committee on March 3, when he said, “Ontario has had a very good economic run in the last 10 years.” I would like to thank the member for recognizing our government's accom-

plishments on job creation and economic stewardship. But, sadly, the member's support was omitted.

Finally, the report failed to mention when my colleague from Pickering–Scarborough East asked the committee to recommend “that the government maintain its prudent disciplined fiscal management to continue to improve public services and strengthen Ontario's economy while delivering a balanced budget.” The PC members on committee voted nay. I guess this isn't surprising from the party that left Ontario with a \$5.6-billion deficit. Recognizing these glaring omissions, I look forward to receiving the updated report from the Conservatives.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Community health centres, or CHCs, are non-profit organizations funded by our government that enhance community development by providing primary health care and locally focused health promotion programs. Today is CHC Day at Queen's Park, and I would like to sincerely commend the dedicated professionals who work at Ontario's CHCs for making our communities stronger.

Before being elected to the Legislature, I had the honour of serving on the board of the Centretown Community Health Centre in my riding of Ottawa Centre. It was here that I learned first-hand about the excellent work being done with communities to improve the health and well-being of Ontarians.

In my riding, we are fortunate to have three CHCs that help families access the care and support they need. The Carlington Community and Health Services centre provides medical counselling and health programs that include drop-ins, support groups, training, education and support for community initiatives. The Somerset West Community Health Centre takes a proactive approach to health care by providing outreach to individuals and groups in at-risk communities. They visit shelters, drop-in centers, seniors' buildings and homes, wherever the need arises. The Centretown Community Health Centre acts as a community leader by coordinating three city-wide programs: the community diabetes education program of Ottawa, lifestyle enrichment for senior adults, and GLBTTQ youth mental health counselling. There are 74 community health centres and satellites in Ontario. By the time all 103 CHCs and satellites are up and running, funding for CHCs will exceed \$300 million annually.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the members. In the east gallery, we'd like to welcome Mr. Larry O'Connor, former member from the riding of Durham–York in the 35th Parliament. Mr. O'Connor, welcome back to Queen's Park.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

INVESTING IN ONTARIO ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 PERMETTANT D'INVESTIR DANS L'ONTARIO

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make payments to eligible recipients out of money appropriated by the Legislature and to amend the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics Act and the Treasury Board Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 35, Loi autorisant le ministre des Finances à faire des versements aux bénéficiaires admissibles sur les crédits affectés par la Législature et modifiant la Loi de 2004 sur la transparence et la responsabilité financières, la Loi sur le ministère du Trésor et de l'Économie et la Loi de 1991 sur le Conseil du Trésor.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: During ministerial statements.

1350

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to regulate the spreading and storage of sewage sludge and biosolids / Projet de loi 36, Loi réglementant l'épandage et le stockage des boues d'épuration et des biosolides.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. John O'Toole: The intention of the bill is to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require that a person obtain a certificate of approval from the director before spreading or storing sewage sludge and other biosolids and products derived from them. The certificate of approval may be subject to the testing, recording and reporting requirements of the director, as they see fit.

This bill is implemented at this time in light of the proposed framework for the management of non-agricultural source material, NASM, and the discussion around that issue with the Ministry of the Environment.

716056 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2008

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act to revive 716056 Ontario Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY REPORTING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE DEVOIR DE SIGNALER LES CAS DE PORNOGRAPHIE JUVÉNILE

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to protect Ontario's children / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille afin de protéger les enfants de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: This bill would amend the Child and Family Services Act to make it clear that sexual exploitation includes child pornography. If passed, this bill would make it mandatory for any person who comes across an image that they believe is or may be child pornography to report it, and the failure to do so would be an offence.

Les principaux éléments de ce projet de loi requièrent que quiconque a des motifs raisonnables de croire qu'une représentation ou un écrit constitue ou pourrait constituer de la pornographie juvénile doit communiquer promptement les renseignements dont il dispose à un organisme, à une agence ou à une personne désignée par réglementation, et la faillite de le communiquer est une infraction de cette loi.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AND HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT AMENDMENT ACT (ASSISTANCE TO MUNICIPALITIES), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DES VOIES PUBLIQUES ET DES TRANSPORTS EN COMMUN (AIDE AUX MUNICIPALITÉS)

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 38, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to the

assistance that the Minister provides to municipalities / *Projet de loi 38, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard de l'aide apportée aux municipalités par le ministre.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This bill, if passed, would compel the provincial government to treat municipalities in the same fair way that the federal government is treating them by sharing gas tax revenue with all municipalities, regardless of whether or not they have a public transportation system. I'm hoping that all members in this House will support this piece of legislation.

BUY IN CANADA FOR MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 FAVORISANT L'ACHAT DE VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN AU CANADA

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to promote the purchase of mass transit vehicles that are made in Canada / *Projet de loi 39, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun fabriqués au Canada.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bill Mauro: The purpose of the reintroduction of this act is to ensure that in the future, any municipality or procurement agency purchasing mass transit vehicles as described herein in the province of Ontario, when that municipality or agency receives funds from the province of Ontario, they will do so in accordance with the conditions contained herein. I look forward to second reading debate.

VISITEUR

VISITOR

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J'aimerais souhaiter la bienvenue au membre du Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie de Cornwall. Also, I would like to welcome everyone to the CHC reception tonight, from 5 to 7 in the leg dining room. Le Centre de santé communautaire de l'Estrie comprend, en plus du Centre de Cornwall, quatre satellites : Alexandria, Chrysler, Bourget et Embrun. J'aimerais lui souhaiter la bienvenue.

VISITOR

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw members' attention to the

west public gallery. That's where Justin Searls is. Justin is a second-year political science major from the University of Akron, in Akron, Ohio. He's an intern in my office right now, and he is here as part of the Ontario Legislative Assembly intern program. Please say hello to Justin.

VISITORS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to welcome to the House three classes of grade 10 students from Marc Garneau Collegiate in Don Valley West. Welcome to the Legislature.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to take this opportunity to remind the members—I know that the introduction of guests is an issue that the House leaders are discussing. We welcome all the guests that are here and those that have not been introduced. I appreciate those that have given me a heads up, but I would be very happy to introduce those guests on behalf of all of us, so that if you were to present me with a list prior to question period, I would do that introduction on all of our behalf, so that we don't have to continually deal with points of order.

To the grade 10 class in particular, I made reference yesterday to grade 5 classes and how important it was for us to demonstrate to grade 5s how to act in a legislative chamber. I trust that we'll be conscious of the grade 10s that are here and the wonderful way that we will operate in this chamber. Welcome.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The economy is fundamentally strong and resilient despite the fact that it is currently being buffeted by a number of challenges. It is critical, now more than ever, to take every opportunity available to us to invest in Ontario.

Today I introduced the Investing in Ontario Act, 2008: "Investing in Ontario" because it would allow us to further our balanced approach—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It didn't last very long. As I said in my statement yesterday, there is room for some gentle banter within this chamber, but if I can't hear the individual who is speaking, you can't hear the individual who is speaking. I think, not only for the benefit of the members but for the guests who are here visiting the chamber, let's give those members the opportunity to speak.

If they would add 30 seconds back to the clock, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's "Investing in Ontario" because it would allow us to further our balanced approach to paying down debt while making critical investments in Ontario's economy.

This bill, if passed, would allow a portion of any unanticipated year-end surplus to both address priority public needs such as municipal infrastructure projects as well as reduce the province's accumulated financial deficit. Currently, all year-end surpluses go toward debt reduction. If the proposed legislation is enacted, we would use the regulation-making authority in the proposed act to direct the available portion of any year-end surplus in 2007-08 to municipalities for infrastructure priorities. This is a balanced way to reduce the provincial debt as well as better help municipalities to address their capital needs.

Let me explain what we would provide under regulations that we would make if the proposed legislation is enacted.

If the province were to achieve a surplus in excess of \$800 million, the first \$600 million would be used to reduce the province's accumulated financial deficit, and the remaining amount would be provided to municipalities for capital purposes. This means that municipalities could receive a minimum of \$200 million in additional capital funding—funding above and beyond the investments and supports the province already provides.

Through this initiative, we are demonstrating our government's commitment to treating municipalities as true partners in building a stronger Ontario community. Municipalities would have the flexibility to use the funding for their own capital priorities, whether it's to improve roads and bridges, expand transit or upgrade social housing.

Let me be clear: We will have accountability provisions in place, consistent with the province's new transfer payment directives. And to ensure that available funds are distributed in a fair and transparent manner, we are proposing to distribute funding to all municipalities on the basis of population.

We know that investing in municipal infrastructure not only addresses the capital needs of our community, but it creates jobs in the short term and builds prosperity in the long run.

We have heard loud and clear from our municipal partners that they support this proposed act and appreciate what it can achieve. That's because this would be on top of the growing annual funding that the province already provides to municipalities. For example, we are providing \$870 million in 2008 through the Ontario municipal partnership fund, we are saving municipalities more than \$900 million per year by 2011 through uploading the Ontario drug benefit and Ontario disability support program costs, and we are providing \$1.6 billion by 2010 in gas tax funding.

Our government has always taken a balanced approach to reducing the provincial debt while making strategic investments in the Ontario economy. We believe this is a prudent, responsible approach. We are building on our plan to strengthen the economy and taking every opportunity available to us to invest in Ontario.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE INFRASTRUCTURE MUNICIPALE

Hon. Jim Watson: The McGuinty government is working hard to develop and maintain a strong relationship with Ontario's municipalities. I want to offer my congratulations to Minister Duncan for his Investing in Ontario Act, which, if passed, would continue this government's support.

For example, we have progressive agreements with both the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, AMO, and the city of Toronto that set out that we will consult and co-operate with each other. When the Minister of Finance announced the proposed new act, Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion recognized this government's support for municipalities by saying, "This is just great. The province has done exactly what we've asked them to do."

Our government has introduced legislation in the past, including revisions to the Planning Act and the Municipal Act, that gives municipalities more tools and flexibility to act in the best interests of their communities.

Notre gouvernement a fait adopter des lois, dont les modifications à la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire et à la Loi de 2001 sur les municipalités, qui confèrent aux municipalités plus d'outils et de la souplesse pour agir dans l'intérêt de leurs collectivités.

We are also proud to be back in the affordable housing business and to support local affordable housing initiatives. Just yesterday, the Premier announced that we will be providing \$100 million to repair existing housing stock, which will help nearly 10,000 of our fellow citizens.

We are also expanding Infrastructure Ontario's OSIFA loan program to include loans to municipalities for capital repairs to social housing—a first in this province. We are justifiably very proud of our partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the city of Toronto in the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. Even before the review releases its consensus report in late spring, we've been taking immediate action to support municipalities.

Nous sommes également très fiers de notre partenariat avec l'Association des municipalités de l'Ontario et la ville de Toronto dans le cadre de l'examen provincial-municipal du financement et du mode de prestation des services.

We are uploading Ontario drug benefit costs, and next year we will upload the cost of the Ontario disability support program. By the time this is fully implemented, every single municipality in the province of Ontario will

be saving, collectively, \$935 million from the property tax rolls.

We've also increased the province's share of public health funding to 75% and increased funding to strengthen land ambulance services.

We have also increased, as the Premier announced at the ROMA conference and the Good Roads conference, the municipal infrastructure investment fund that Minister Caplan announced, to \$450 million. This is helping communities restore and revitalize vital public infrastructure.

These are just a couple of the examples of our ongoing support and co-operation with municipalities in Ontario. The proposed Investing in Ontario Act is the latest step in this relationship, a step that reinforces our continuing commitment to strengthen Ontario communities, to co-operate with them, to get along with them. I'm very proud of this legislation and I'm sure all members will support it when it comes up for debate.

NUTRITION MONTH

Hon. Margaret R. Best: March is Nutrition Month in Canada. Nutrition Month reinforces the importance of good nutrition and the role it plays in good health. It is designated by the Dietitians of Canada.

The government of Ontario is working to increase access to nutrition-related resources and programs for healthy Ontarians. We are all aware that eating healthy food can reduce the risk of obesity and fight chronic diseases such as stroke, diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer.

As part of the McGuinty government's effort, we have invested \$10 million towards the action plan for healthy eating and active living for Ontario. Our plan includes the northern fruit and vegetable pilot, currently serving three weekly servings of fruit and vegetables to over 12,000 school-age children in the Algoma and Porcupine regions.

Our notgonnakillyou.ca initiative, an interactive website for youth aged 12 to 15, promotes healthy eating and physical activity, and EatRight Ontario is a telephone and website service that provides free access to dietitians. EatRight Ontario is available Monday to Friday from 9 to 5 by calling toll-free 1-877-510-5102. An online "ask-a-dietitian" is also available and will respond to questions.

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In partnership with Dietitians of Canada, EatRight Ontario offers advice on family nutrition, healthy weights, meal-planning advice for busy families, seniors' nutrition and disease prevention.

The Ministry of Health Promotion is also working in partnership with the Ministry of Education on legislation to ban unhealthy trans fats in school cafeterias and to ensure that items sold in school vending machines are healthy. We are working together because we are committed to promoting student health and making schools healthy places to learn.

On the occasion of Nutrition Month, I would like to recognize several students and their teachers from Wexford Collegiate School for the Arts in the riding of Scarborough Centre who have joined us in the House today. The students and staff at Wexford have accepted our healthy schools challenge. They are promoting healthier food choices in their cafeteria and encouraging student use of sports equipment through student-led fit fairs. They are one of more than 1,300 schools in Ontario that have risen to our healthy schools challenge. Congratulations to Wexford on being a healthy school. I appreciate your being here today and admire your commitment to making healthy food choices and being active every day.

As Ontario's Minister of Health Promotion, I encourage all Ontarians to make nutritious, healthy food choices every day. A healthier Ontario is a wealthier Ontario, and together we are building on that in this Nutrition Month and every single day of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me first point out that this government now has decided not to try to pay down any debt—which is a shame—or very little of it, because—

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak:—well, to go back on their debt payments, because as the minister knows, debt has gone up under the McGuinty government by some \$13 billion. We are now \$162 billion in debt. That costs an interest payment of \$9 billion per year, or \$1 million per hour, that could go into tax reductions or needed programs, but instead they're backtracking on any plan to pay down the debt.

Let's be clear about the nature of this bill. The minister could, at any time, transfer funds to municipalities in a predictable and transparent manner for capital funds; he simply has chosen not to. In this bill—let's be clear about this—he is putting municipal infrastructure at the back of the pack. After Dalton McGuinty gets done with all of his end-of-year, March madness spending, his famous end-of-year political slush funds, only then could municipalities get a slice of the pie, and only if cabinet were to decide so.

Let's think about some of those gems. Let's not forget about the world's most famous cricket club that asked for \$150,000. Dalton McGuinty gave them \$1 million in a transfer to try to buy political votes. And let's talk about various community centres like the Iranian-Canadian Community Centre, which received funding with no letter of application whatsoever, and groups that received money because they had connections in the Ontario Liberal Party. It's not what you do; it's who you knew.

Municipalities will now be at the back of the pack after Dalton McGuinty gets done with his friendly slush funds to those well connected to the party.

Let's not forget the mini-scandal last year when the member from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh got into a bit of hot water. He was the stool pigeon. Remem-

ber, he talked about how he accessed funds for his municipality from a fund that had no application and no transparency whatsoever? That was part of the Auditor General's investigation.

So I suspect that what we're actually seeing here today is a Liberal attempt to get around the Auditor General's review by deciding within cabinet which municipalities get the funding and how much. It's all done by regulations, as the minister knows. I think what we're going to see, actually, is another Liberal slush fund outside of the accountability parameters. As Dalton McGuinty himself likes to say, "We've seen this movie before."

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John O'Toole: It was over a year ago that the minister was proud to announce the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. In fact, it's my understanding that they delayed that hearing until after the October 2007 provincial election.

Our leader, John Tory, called for that review to be done expeditiously prior to the budget. In fact, what has happened is that they're not going to release the report in the spring, as promised originally. It's not going to be released until some time after June.

My problem is that each day we get a different piece announced. The announcement today is a little piece for housing, a little piece for setting up another infrastructure group.

The real part here is that the provincial surplus slush fund, as my colleague said, was an announcement with no strings attached—another questionable set of circumstances around who gets the money, under what plan, under what application, or is it whom they know? That's the question.

My question is, where is the plan? Where is the plan from this minister to deal with the municipal service review? A little piece here, a little piece there, but no plan. I can tell you what municipalities—AMO and the Good Roads association—told me. They want stable, predictable, long-term funding.

I would encourage you, Minister, to in fact work with your federal counterpart, Mr. Flaherty, as well as Mr. Cannon. Work with them with a plan for Building Canada. You haven't agreed to that agreement to access federal funds to build the infrastructure in this province.

I don't see any plan here. I see an announcement here, an announcement there, but really no plan. I have to ask the Minister of Finance, as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, to tell me what the plan is to upload responsibilities to the province and give responsibilities to the municipalities with their fragile tax base. This is just another sham, another crashshoot of who gets the money.

NUTRITION MONTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Minister Best for her statement on Nutrition Month. Good

nutrition is such an important determinant of health. As our health care system is struggling to deal with chronic illnesses, best practices tell us that good nutrition is always an important part of the solution, from primary prevention all the way to treatment.

But I would also like to remind the government of what Mrs. Leslie Whittington-Carter, from Dietitians of Canada, said when she presented at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs: There is such a lack of outpatient nutrition counselling and such long waiting lists that access is really compromised.

I'm pleased to celebrate Nutrition Month. I would be even more pleased to have access to dietitians.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Never, I think, has this House seen such a bizarre bill; never has this House seen such contortions of trying to give away money to municipalities; never has this House seen such convoluted talk as has come from these two ministers.

The reality is that the municipalities across Ontario—all 480 of them—need consistent, secure, predictable funding, and they're not getting it through the body of this bill. What they need is for this government to recognize that the true load being borne by the municipalities is the \$3.2 billion of downloaded costs which, I acknowledge, were put on by a previous government, but which this government is very slow to upload. The upload they have announced before 2011 amounts to only some \$900 million. I want to tell you that they need the whole \$3.2 billion. Everything from Ontario Works to ODSP, everything from daycare to health to ambulance services is in the purview and prerogative of this government, not the municipalities. What they need is wise, prudent action to remove unfair costs. Instead, they're getting money if—if the surplus is above \$600 million. They are going to get absolutely nothing if the surplus is below \$600 million.

1420

We have to ask ourselves, in this time of financial insecurity that we are witnessing, particularly south of the border in the United States—over the last few days the finance minister clearly should have noticed a number of events transpiring that could cause and may cause harm to this province. He should have noticed that there is a meltdown. Bear Stearns, you know, was sold for \$2 a share yesterday. He should have noticed that the United States today is intervening in the market, something I never thought I would see happen. He should have noticed that there is a reduction in consumer goods. He should have noticed that the subprime continues in virtually every state of the Union. He should have noticed, looking at Ontario figures, that the spillover has started to affect Ontario.

Here is his great bill that maybe—maybe—there's going to be some money next year. One has to ask, is

there in fact going to be money next year? There may be a few dollars this year, but is there going to be anything in future years?

I had an opportunity to look at the bill, as it was handed over to us a few minutes ago. Section 2 leaves it to the finance minister to give the money to any person or entity; it does not clearly state that it's going to municipalities. So it gives the option in subsequent years, I would suggest, for him to give it to any person or entity that he chooses.

Then I looked at section 14.1, which says that this is going to be a retroactive expenditure. It will come before this House after the auditor has reported. So there is no opportunity for the Legislature to question it, either in the House or in committee. I mean, it's pretty good stuff.

Then I looked at section 4(1) of the transparency and accountability act, which he included in this bill, and which allows for a deficit, which I think this minister is heading for, if not in this budget then certainly in the next one.

I had an opportunity this weekend to read the comment from the Toronto Sun, and I don't think I could say it any better myself: "Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan is the Rube Goldberg of Queen's Park"—that's the guy who did the cartoons, building a complex structure that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the members—there are certainly a number of issues I could address the House with, and I started yesterday. One of the things I plan on circulating is a list that has been prepared by the Table of what is acceptable and not acceptable when it comes to parliamentary language.

There was a comment made by the member from Niagara–West Glanbrook, in a reference he made to one of the members, that I know, in consultation with the table, I should have asked the member to withdraw. I would ask that he perhaps consider withdrawing that.

But I will share the list of unparliamentary language, because I think it is a good refresher for those members who are new and those who are veterans in this House, and I would ask that the member consider withdrawing the comment he made.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the members to allow the pages to assemble for introduction. I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming this group of legislative pages, serving in the first session of the 39th Parliament:

Natalie Au, Oak Ridges–Markham; Adam Bernardo, Richmond Hill; Charat Choudhary, Scarborough Southwest; Madeline Ciuffetelli Muzzi, Etobicoke–Lakeshore; Alexander Coomes, Halton; Christopher Dimoff, Scarborough Centre; Chantal Duchesne, Brant;

Ramandeep Farmaha, Mississauga–Brampton South; Ela Hefler, Toronto–Danforth; Laura Kim, Kitchener–Waterloo; Samuel Kloppenburg, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; Michael Kushnir, Niagara West–Glanbrook; Claire Leunissen, London–Fanshawe; George Li, Etobicoke Centre; Alex Mathews, Eglinton–Lawrence; Daniel Muzzi, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; Tola Stewart, Northumberland–Quinte West; Fatima Sunderji, Vaughan; Magali Toy, Davenport; Jacqui van Warmerdam, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Welcome to all of you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier and deals with his government's failed approach to the challenges facing our manufacturing sector. I do so in the wake of today's closure announcement by Shorewood Packaging in my hometown of Brockville, throwing 270 people out of work.

While we appreciate that there are external factors affecting Ontario's manufacturing sector, those companies are starting out behind the eight ball, hobbled by your regime of high taxes and excessive red tape. Meanwhile, the other provinces in Canada are cutting their taxes to give themselves an edge over our province. Premier, the path to competitiveness, from our perspective, and I think other provinces, is clear: lower tax rates, the immediate elimination of the capital tax for all business and getting a handle on the need for a reliable and affordable energy supply. What are you waiting for?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I look forward to the continuing opportunity to challenge the Conservative Party's assertion that the best thing we could possibly do at this point in time is to cut taxes. I want Ontarians to better understand the consequences of the option that the Conservative Party would have us weigh.

They're saying that we should cut corporate income taxes, to the tune of \$2.3 billion; they're telling us to eliminate the health premium, to the tune of \$2.8 billion. If we take those two alone, we're talking about a \$5.1-billion cut in revenues. Some 75% of all the money that we spend here on behalf of Ontarians is directed to health care, education and services for the vulnerable. You can't take \$5.1 billion out of the system and not close hospitals, not fire nurses, not make cuts to education, not drive up tuition fees and not proceed with further cuts to our social services.

We had a referendum on that in 2003, and I thought the results were very clear. Ontarians rejected that approach then, and I'm confident they reject it still today.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yesterday, the Premier was talking about his recent trip to Belleville. What he omitted was a comment in an editorial in the Belleville Intelligencer, that what the Premier did not say is that

"the Ontario economy has already lost, and is forecast to lose, many more jobs than his program can hope to create...."

Since 2003, Ontario places last in the country when it comes to private sector job creation, but first in jobs in the public sector. It's unsustainable, and the sooner the Premier realizes this the better off we'll be. Why is the Premier refusing to take the steps necessary to get our economy back on the right track?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The other dimension that I think it's really important for Ontarians to understand is that not only are the Conservatives proposing that we cut taxes, but they're proposing that we cut the wrong kinds of taxes. They want us to cut corporate income taxes, which are payable by profitable Ontario corporations.

We have a different approach. What we are doing is eliminating capital taxes, which benefit businesses that are struggling and aren't making money. We are reducing business education taxes, which, again, helps businesses that are struggling. We're also enriching the capital cost allowance provisions, which, again, help businesses that are struggling.

1430

There is a world of difference between proposing that we cut taxes on profitable corporations and lending income tax support to those corporations which continue to struggle. We chose the latter option. That's the approach which has been sought by the manufacturing sector in particular. We will continue to work hand in hand with them to help them grow stronger with every passing day.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Some 180,000 manufacturing jobs lost since January of 2005 and counting—the Premier doesn't seem to understand that every new public sector job creates a new demand for tax dollars, but every new private sector job creates a new supply of revenue to fund our social programs, to pay for hospitals and schools. Competitive business taxes create the private sector jobs we desperately need in this province. The Premier suggests that this is an issue of political ideology, but it's really just good economic sense. And that's why, whether it is the Tories in Alberta, the Liberals in British Columbia or the NDP in Saskatchewan or Manitoba, they all recognize the importance of having competitive tax rates, and all those provinces are booming. Why won't this government relent? Why won't this government admit that it's wrong and stop choking businesses with the highest tax rates in the country?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so that we bring a bit of perspective to what's happening to the Ontario economy: First of all, we have generated 450,000 more jobs—those are net new jobs—since 2003. That accounts for one third of all new job creation in our country: one third coming from one province, and that's something we can all be proud of. The unemployment rate today is 6.1%. When we first earned the privilege of serving Ontarians as their government, it was 7%. In January of this year, Ontario outpaced all other provinces in the country when it came to new job creation in the manufacturing sector.

So it is true that other provinces which are blessed with oil and gas to be found underfoot are doing well, and we congratulate them in that regard. But even though the cost of oil has gone up 80% in the last 12 months, and that's been good for other provinces, it's presented a real challenge for us here in Ontario. That's why we're proceeding with a five-point plan that includes, among other things, cuts in a thoughtful way to business taxes.

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I point out that for the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment exceeds the national average. He should remember that.

My question, again, is for the Premier. Senior economists agree that Ontario's marginal effective tax rate—the highest in the country—is killing jobs, shutting down businesses and chasing away new investment.

The McGuinty Liberals are on the wrong track. Their oppressive tax regime and excessive red tape have Ontario's economy on a dead-end road. But they face an opportunity with the upcoming budget: They can change the direction. The course is clear: competitive tax rates for businesses, a reduction in red tape, and an affordable and sustainable energy supply. Will the Premier please advise this House today, since he's the one writing the budget, whether or not we'll be seeing any of the measures next Tuesday?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That "tax cuts create jobs" is a fairly seductive, outdated, Reform-driven mantra. If there was ever any doubt, there is no longer any "progressive" left in this Conservative Party; it is obviously Reform-driven.

Again, it's important for Ontarians to understand that what the leader of the official opposition is talking about is taking \$5.1 billion out of government revenues. You can't do that and not close hospitals, fire nurses, make cuts to education, drive up tuition, fire water inspectors and make further cuts to social assistance. We've seen that movie; we don't want to watch a rerun. We are not prepared to make those kinds of cuts. We're going to proceed to grow this economy in a responsible, thoughtful way that invests in our people, invests in infrastructure, invests in innovation and works with Ontario businesses.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We've all given the Premier a GPS to get back on the right path, but he insists he wants to wander into the Bob Rae wilderness. Short-term bailouts for some businesses and cash infusions for others may smooth out some of the bumps, but they don't change the fact that we're on a dead-end road.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

This is question and answer. As I said before, there is some room for some gentle banter back and forth, but when I can't hear the question, you can't hear the question either. We all need to be able to hear that.

Start the clock, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The name Bob Rae seems to have sensitivity over there.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Municipal Affairs, I just made a comment about trying to keep it toned down a little bit in here.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think most of us would agree that sound economic policies could and should cross party lines. When the Tories in Alberta, the Liberals in BC and the NDP in Saskatchewan and Manitoba lower their corporate tax rates, they're saying they want to be in business. They're saying they're willing to do what it takes to attract new business because they know that's how you secure the tax revenues we need to fund our schools and hospitals. Why does the Premier insist on ignoring the obvious and keeping us on the wrong track? Why?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Tax cuts alone don't cut it. They don't cut it today, assuming they ever have in the past. The world has changed. We have a global economy, we have a knowledge-based economy, we have an economy where change proceeds at a relentless and breath-taking pace.

We have a thoughtful approach to growing the economy. We're investing heavily in the skills and education of our workers. I'm proud to report that since we first formed the government, we're now graduating 10,000 more young people every year from our high schools, who used to drop out; 100,000 more young people are going on to colleges and universities; and we have 50,000 more people enrolled in apprenticeships today than we had in 2003. That's just one dimension of our five-point plan.

We are also investing heavily in infrastructure. We have a 10-year, \$60-billion plan; 190,000 jobs alone are being created in the public transit sector as a result of our investments in infrastructure.

The Conservative Party can remain mired in the past and this antiquated notion that it's all about tax cuts. We—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Let's talk about another province, Quebec, facing similar challenges to Ontario with its manufacturing base. Quebec has a corporate tax rate lower than ours, and their economy is expected to grow faster than ours. Alberta, BC and Saskatchewan may be benefiting from the demand for natural resources, but their lower corporate tax rates are also attracting other businesses; all the more reason we need every competitive advantage we can find.

Reduce red tape. Kill the job-killing capital tax for all businesses right now. Get our marginal corporate tax rate down from the highest level in the entire country to a competitive level. The choice is the Premier's. Which one is he going to make?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Here are a few facts about Ontario today. We have the highest rate of post-secondary education of any population anywhere in the Western world, and we're proud of that. No province is investing more in innovation than we are—close to \$2

billion. No province is investing more in infrastructure than we are here in Ontario; again, it is \$60 billion over the course of 10 years. No province is devoting more money, more effort and more time to establishing good, solid working relationships with the business sector and with labour as well.

We are proud of this province. We believe it is filled with opportunity for the people who are living here, and we are proud to invite the world to come and invest here.

I'm a little bit concerned about the federal government saying that people should not invest in Ontario. My question to the leader of the official opposition is, is he with the people of Ontario in our hopes, in our aspirations, in our confidence in our economy, or is he with the federal government?

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Premier. The London area used to have more than 40,000 manufacturing jobs—jobs that are vital to the local economy, including those involved in the manufacture of commuter rail locomotives. However, under the McGuinty Liberals, over the last three years London has lost more than 10% of those manufacturing jobs. That has taken an astounding \$160 million in wages out of the local London economy. My question is, how many more jobs will disappear from London before the Premier decides to do the right thing and pass the Buy Ontario bill that New Democrats have put forward to help sustain manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP raises an important issue. I think we all share a sense of responsibility when it comes to ensuring that, as much as possible, we use investments made on behalf of Ontarians to support new infrastructure, to ensure that that turns into as many Ontario jobs as possible. We will be making an announcement on that very point shortly.

But again, I want to raise something that I raised yesterday with the leader of the NDP. When I visited the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay, the question that weighed heavily on their minds was not the one he is putting to me today. It was: Why weren't the NDP in support of investing in public transit, in support of investing in a subway system that would bring more economic opportunities to Thunder Bay and that plant in particular? That's the question that weighed heavily on the minds of people who are working at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I don't know who the Premier was talking to in Thunder Bay, but what the workers really want to know is, why did the McGuinty Liberal government abandon Ontario's existing Buy Ontario policy in 2005? It's not just about Thunder Bay; it's also about the communities of Kitchener-Waterloo and Cambridge that are home to 60,000 manufacturing jobs—or at least they were. However, under the McGuinty Liberals, 6,000 of those jobs are now gone, which represents a loss

of \$300 million to the local Kitchener–Waterloo, Cambridge economy.

My question again: How many more jobs have to disappear from that community before the McGuinty government recognizes the error you made in 2005 and you reinstate a Buy Ontario policy to sustain manufacturing jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me tell you about some of the good news associated with the investments we are making in public infrastructure at this point in time. I mentioned a few times already today that we have a 10-year, \$60-billion infrastructure investment plan. There are 190,000 jobs that come from the public transit initiative alone.

But on top of that, of course, there are all kinds of repair and renovation projects going on at some 11,000 projects in our schools. I can tell you, Ontario workers are working on those construction sites. There are over 100 major hospital construction projects under way. Those are Ontario workers who are there, working on Ontario jobs. We are building 18,000 affordable housing units; again, those are jobs for Ontario workers. We're buying 469 new Ontario government vehicles. They've been ordered in February. Those will be built or manufactured in Ontario. So we're doing everything we can to ensure that as we invest in this economy, it actually translates into Ontario jobs as well.

Mr. Howard Hampton: It's interesting to listen to the Premier try to confuse the issues. The issue is about manufacturing jobs, not about a construction job somewhere, not about an operating job somewhere. It's about manufacturing jobs, the fact that Ontario has lost 200,000 good manufacturing jobs under the McGuinty government. And I'm simply asking, why won't you do what other jurisdictions have done successfully? The United States has a "buy America" policy. Even Mexico has a "buy Mexico" policy for transit equipment. Most of the European Union countries have a "buy domestic" policy. It works to sustain manufacturing jobs in urban transit in those jurisdictions.

How many more good manufacturing jobs need to disappear from Ontario before the McGuinty government recognizes the mistake you made in 2005 when you eliminated the Buy Ontario policy? How many jobs, Premier, have to disappear before you admit your mistake?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's been an unfortunate reality of North America at the beginning of the 21st century that we've seen, in fact, millions of manufacturing jobs lost from the North American economy. But I do want to say once again that we are investing heavily in infrastructure and that is translating into Ontario jobs. When it comes to public transit, we can say today that 82% of all the money that we spend on public transit is spent here in Ontario, and that 82% is translated into Ontario jobs.

I say to the leader of the NDP, I understand where he is coming from. We will be speaking shortly about a Buy Ontario policy, but I think more fairly a Buy Canada

policy. Given the limited manufacturing that is taking place actually within this province, if you take a look at what is happening south of the border, it's not a "buy in-state policy" but a "buy America" policy. We'll be speaking to the very issue that the leader of the NDP continues to raise.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the Premier tries to confuse the issues. He tries to lump in operating costs with construction costs and with manufacturing costs. This is not going to work, Premier.

For example, you attended another photo op today where you tried to say that the buses that are being purchased are overwhelmingly going to result in Ontario jobs. We called the bus company; we called the manufacturer. Do you know what they said? That 65% of the money that goes towards the manufacture of those buses will be spent outside of Ontario and outside of Canada. Why? Because most of the manufacturing is happening outside of Ontario and outside of Canada.

My question is simple. You say you want to spend \$17 billion on transit. Then the question is this: Will you bring in a Buy Ontario policy so that it results in the sustainability of more manufacturing jobs in Ontario? Or are you prepared to allow them to go to Mexico, to China or wherever?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're looking at a base already of 82% which is being invested in the Ontario economy and being translated into Ontario jobs. Something else I want to draw to the leader of the NDP's attention: When I visited the Bombardier plant, they were rolling off the line there these double-decker cars for New Mexico and for Korea. I don't think the leader of the NDP is advocating that they should not be working in Bombardier to build rolling stock for New Mexico and for Korea, because that work is supporting good Ontario jobs.

I know that the leader of the NDP can afford to be reckless and to throw off caution when it comes to the assertions he makes, but I think we have to be careful and ensure at the end of the day that we don't compromise the Ontario economy and we don't lose Ontario jobs.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the Premier tries to confuse the issue. I've been at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay several times. You know and everybody else knows that if there's one cent of US federal money in a transit car contract for New York or Chicago or Los Angeles, then 60% of the finishing work on that transit car has to be done in the United States. All they end up building in Thunder Bay is the shell. Once the shell is finished, they ship it to the plant in the United States.

You should know that 98% of the subway and commuter cars ordered for German cities are manufactured in Germany; 100% of the subway and commuter cars for French cities are manufactured in France. They sustain good jobs in those jurisdictions. What does the McGuinty government have against sustaining good

manufacturing jobs in Ontario by bringing in a Buy Ontario policy?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the leader of the NDP's impatience on this issue, but I want to welcome him to Mr. Mauro's club. Mr. Mauro has been working on this issue for a long, long time now, and one of the very first things that he had to do was to allay fears on the floor when they heard that the leader of the NDP was opposed to a new subway line. They worried about their economic futures, they worried about their families and they worried about their jobs. Again, we are looking at this issue very closely and we look forward to making a very positive announcement very shortly.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier, the reason that this is such an important issue is because your government, the McGuinty government, abandoned the Buy Ontario policy in 2005. Referring to Mr. Mauro, Mr. Mauro has been talking about a Buy Ontario policy, but nothing has happened for two years, now headed into three years. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of good manufacturing jobs are being lost. I simply say again, Premier: Look at jurisdictions around the world. They're spending billions of dollars on public transit, on urban transit. They have the good sense to leverage that expenditure into maintaining and sustaining manufacturing jobs in their own jurisdiction.

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The question is this: We've seen you make the wrong decision before. We've seen you delay on this issue. Will you support the NDP bill to bring in a Buy Ontario policy now, not next—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will not be supporting the NDP bill. I think, carried out to its logical conclusion, it will compromise our economy and result in lost jobs. I'll find another opportunity, or the minister will find some other opportunity, to speak to that in more detail. We'll come forward with something which I think is thoughtful, reasonable, responsible and effective.

I can say, and I want Ontarians to know, that when it comes to public transit in particular, 82% of all the money devoted to that is presently being spent inside the province of Ontario and is being translated into Ontario jobs. The issue is, when it comes to rolling stock, the remaining 18%—what can we do, what should we do to squeeze as many Ontario jobs out of that as we possibly can?

As I say, we're giving that some very careful thought. We're looking at experiences in other parts of the world, and we look forward to making an announcement shortly that doesn't compromise our economy at the end of the day.

DEVELOPMENT FEES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Minister, builders in Brantford would like to know where you stand with respect to extortion, the development fees that are being charged by the Haudenosaunee Development Institute of Six Nations. Your government has stated that the Haudenosaunee Development Institute has no authority to stop development or charge development fees, and yet we see the headline "Six Nations Can Make Developers Pay, Ontario Says" and reports that "10 developers have each paid a \$7,000 application fee to the Haudenosaunee Development Institute."

Builders wish to know, Minister: Where do you stand with respect to these HDI development fees and will your government stand behind the builders?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I want to give great credit to MPP David Levac, who brought together members of the community for the county, as well as the builders, as well as the band council and Haudenosaunee Six Nations, in the same room to talk to each other, to try and create the sense of community that, for so many years in fact, had been the pride of that community; that is, Haudenosaunee Six Nations living and working side by side.

This was an approach that tried to come up with solutions, not the divisive approach the member seems to be advocating, where you have to choose one side or another. I congratulate Dave Levac for doing that for his local community. I certainly will stand beside him and all the community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Your government has also met with HDI and administrator Aaron Detlor. The Tekka newspaper says that you consider "working together with the institute to help consult on issues ... a positive step."

At 6 o'clock this morning, HDI protestors stopped a \$10.5-million hotel project in Brantford, demanding that builders pay upfront development fees. This is the eighth day that construction has been halted. This hotel could employ 50 people, let alone today's construction jobs.

Your government tells developers not to pay the fees and then tells them they're on their own. Minister, when will you actually take some action to end this extortion?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I'd like to know what exactly the member is advocating. What is "action"? Is that telling the police what to do? This government is not going to do that. Is this action about directing police operations? No; that's not what we do. The Ipperwash commission recommended that operational decisions be made by police, and the government has a role to play not in terms of informing police but, as we disclosed, providing the funding necessary.

If what the member is asking is if we are going to work with Haudenosaunee Six Nations, the developers and the municipalities to come to a solution, that answer's yes. I put a call in to Chief Montour and tribal Council Chief McNaughton today, met with them last week, expressed to the band council and tribal council that this is an issue that is going to have to be addressed, because at the end of the day these are the communities that are going to have to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, after the jailing of the chief and five Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation members, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy stated this: "The extreme positions of the government of Ontario in jailing First Nation leaders is an insult to the so-called new relationship with our people." He then added, "Once more, we are being moved out of the way, our valuable resources are being exploited and everybody is benefiting except us."

So here is the reality: The McGuinty government has now jailed First Nation leaders from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug and from Ardoch First Nation, who only ask that the McGuinty government fulfill its constitutional duty, as set down by the Supreme Court of Canada, to consult and accommodate First Nations.

Premier, is this the McGuinty government's new relationship with First Nations: to have the discussion between jail bars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: This morning I spoke again with Grand Chief Stan Beardy, who indicated to me very clearly that he wanted to continue to work with the government, as he was meeting with chiefs this afternoon, to find a way in which we can ensure that First Nations who were not properly consulted by the mining industry at the beginning of exploration talks in fact are able to come to a position where they can come to an agreement and share in the revenues. That's why, with respect to KI, there was an offer to share in revenues, ensure that the exploration had supervision by First Nation-appointed archaeologists and by elders, would stay 100 metres away from the burial zones and sacred sites, would be provided with \$150,000 in order to engage in new talks on a new relationship.

I'll have more to say on that in my supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again the McGuinty government tries to hide behind something that is simply not true. The obligation to consult is not on the mining company. The obligation to consult, as set down by the Supreme Court of Canada, is on provincial governments—the McGuinty government. The trial judge said in his decision that it is completely unacceptable for the McGuinty government to say, "Oh, no, you just consult with the mining company."

This is a failure of the McGuinty government. The grand chief yesterday suspended talks with the McGuinty government. This creates more uncertainty for First Nations and more uncertainty for resource companies.

My simple question is this: When is the McGuinty government going to meet its constitutional duty to consult and accommodate First Nations, as set down by the Supreme Court of Canada, and stop blaming someone else?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The leader of the third party knows very well that the information he is providing to

this House is completely inaccurate. If there was ever a finding by the court that the government of Ontario had in fact violated the Constitution, do you really think the hearing would have ended up the way it did yesterday? No, it wouldn't.

The member seems to want to continue to divide communities when in fact this is a government that is trying to bring us together. The member knows very well that this government bent over backwards with three trips up to KI, with terms under the agreement conceded by Platinex that included guaranteed jobs, that included guaranteed revenue, that included talks around resource revenue sharing and land use planning. It was a package that was put together and presented to the community, and still remains before the community, that the community needs to make a decision about.

Mr. Howard Hampton: After the fact.

Hon. Michael Bryant: No, it was not after the fact, I say to the leader of the third party. He knows very well that it has been on the table for the last three months.

I would encourage the community—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Unfortunately, in my riding of Scarborough Southwest and across the province not all children arrive at school well fed and ready to learn due to various circumstances.

Children cannot succeed if they are hungry and are not getting the nutrition they need. They need a little help to achieve their full potential.

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I was pleased to have the Premier in my riding at Cliffside Public School on Monday morning and to learn that the government has decided to make a new investment in the student nutrition program to ensure that more kids are ready to learn and succeed in the classroom. Could the minister please outline the new investment and how it will help Ontarians, such as constituents in my riding, achieve their full potential?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Scarborough Southwest for his compassion and for his question.

We know that to have a strong economy we must invest in our greatest resource, and that's our people. We also know that it's critically important that we support our children so they have the best possible start in life and the greatest opportunity to achieve their full potential. That is why the Premier announced yesterday, at Cliffside school in Scarborough Southwest, a \$32-million investment that doubles the funding for the student nutrition program. This program already provides healthy meals and snacks to almost 400,000 children across the province, with over 80,000 children in Toronto, in 314 schools. This new investment will ensure that we provide further support to these schools and expand the program

to make sure that more children are ready to learn, that they're alert and ready to achieve their full potential.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: As a supplementary question, I would like to ask the minister about the role of the government in making sure that the hundreds of constituents in Scarborough Southwest who live in social housing units are also included in our plans to include all Ontarians in moving forward. I wonder if the minister could provide any further information regarding that role, especially with housing, as it is so closely attached to the poverty issue itself, if the minister could perhaps elaborate on that.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased that when the Premier made the announcement about affordable housing, the \$100 million province-wide will see \$36 million go to the city of Toronto for repair of social housing units.

We hear the braying from across the way in the NDP. Let me read you what the NDP were promising in *Save Our Structures*: "The NDP would allocate \$30 million a year to begin to clear up...." Under the leadership of this Premier, we've delivered \$36 million to the city of Toronto.

Let me quote Sharad Kerur, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association executive director, when he said, "While no one government can solve decades of issues affecting the current state and need for more affordable housing, this government is leading the way in finding solutions to improve affordable housing in Ontario. Today's announcement will make a real difference and demonstrates that the government has been listening"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question, the member from Simcoe North.

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, you are aware that two very important events have taken place in the federal Parliament recently that support public safety in our country. To begin with, Bill C-2, the tackling violent crime bill, was finally passed through the Liberal-dominated Senate. Secondly, the federal government created the new 2,500 front-line police officers program that will see \$156 million allocated to our province over the next five years, that will assist police services in hiring 1,000 new police officers, including 500 non-municipal contract officers to the OPP. Minister, are you prepared to participate in the federal front-line police officer program?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'm very, very happy to stand and put Ontario's position forward. We are not satisfied with the commitment the federal government has made with regard to policing, not only in Ontario, but across Canada. Their plan fails to fund these police officers in perpetuity. I simply ask Minister Day to use the McGuinty model, to use the model that our government used when we funded 1,000 officers for the life of the officers.

That translates to \$68 million a year. The federal government does not want to make that commitment, and I look forward to telling the members of the House what the reaction of the policing partners in Ontario is to that failed plan.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, the federal police program is a kick-start program, and you know full well that it will assist police services in hiring front-line officers across our country. I understand that the program is the first of its kind in Canada and it will be subject to review later on.

Minister, I wanted to point out that you never funded 1,000 police officers; you funded 35% of them—\$35,000 on a \$100,000 officer. I am informed that you have to publicly announce whether or not you will participate in this program by March 31 of this year. Are you prepared to stand in this House today and announce that Ontario will participate in the federal government program that will see \$156 million provided to the province of Ontario over the next five years for public safety and community safety? Yes or no?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to respond. Let me start off the response by telling the member across the way what the Canadian Police Association said in their press release of March 6, 2008:

"Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day has fumbled the ball and failed to deliver on a key government commitment," said CPA president Tony Cannavino. "We have been waiting two years for this minister to deliver on the Prime Minister's promise, and we are disappointed by the short-sighted and inadequate response."

We will continue to lobby the federal government to do their part to ensure that we put at least 1,000 police officers on the streets of Ontario, that they fund this program properly and that they fund it for the life of the program, because I know that's what our policing partners want us to do.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The Association of Ontario Health Centres—many of their members are here today—is asking the government to commit to completing a province-wide network of community health centres and aboriginal health access centres. They are asking the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to establish no fewer than 20 new community health centres and AHACs per year over the next four years.

Will the minister agree today to support the AOHCC request so that all Ontarians can have access to primary health care services?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'd like to, as others have, welcome the Association of Ontario Health Centres to the Legislature. I'm enormously proud to have been in the privileged position, as Minister of Health in the McGuinty government, to be doubling the number of

community health centres in the province of Ontario after eight and a half years when they not only received no additional base funding under the Conservatives, but, in fact, there were no community health centres added.

I can tell the honourable member and those in the gallery that our commitment with respect to community health centres is to build out those 28 which are in various stages of emergence in the province of Ontario, which will bring us to 103, which is a doubling of the number that we had. To date, over four years, we have invested a 71% increase, and by the time we've concluded, with those 28 coming to life, the increase over six or seven years will be something like 130% or 140% in additional funding. That stands as a very firm commitment to the community health centre model, and I look forward to offering more information by way of supplementary.

M^{me} France G  linas: As Minister Smitherman has mentioned, there are new CHCs and AHACs presently on their way. They are scheduled to open in 2009.

Experience shows us that it takes about two years from a funding announcement until the doors open on a new CHC. Ontarians need a commitment from the minister today. So I ask again: Will the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care agree today to support a province-wide network of CHCs and AHACs so that all Ontarians have access to primary health care services?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to say that I'm proud to have been part of a government that has added primary care for more than 500,000 people through our first four years in office. In our campaign platform, which we are seeking to adhere to very, very substantially, I can confirm that our commitment is to add 50 additional family health teams, which find their core values very similar to community health centres.

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Further, building on the model in the member's very own home community of Sudbury, it's our plan to add 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics. These, combined with the 28 further CHCs to come to life, will provide Ontarians with enhanced access to family health care and will create that comprehensive network that the honourable member and the association are asking for.

So I can confirm that it is our government's plan to create the most comprehensive model of comprehensive family health care across the breadth of Ontario.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable George Smitherman. I believe that one of the most effective ways to provide meaningful health care to improve the lives of individuals is through a community-focused model. The staff at Rexdale Community Health Centre in my own riding of Etobicoke North, for example, and community health centres across Ontario do just that every day. By taking a more holistic approach to health through addressing the social determinants of health, including

shelter, education, economic and employment security, safety of food and environment, we can achieve a healthy and successful Ontario. Considering the government's approach to integrated and comprehensive health care for all, I would ask the Minister of Health: What have we done recently to support and improve these innovative approaches to health care for Ontarians?

Hon. George Smitherman: It does seem very appropriate that on a day when the community health centres are here, members from all parties have expressed their commitment. But the members of the opposition party had eight and a half years in government and they demonstrated very little commitment to community health centres during that period. On the other hand, we're in the midst of doubling the number of community health centres. Our commitment remains on that basis. It is most certainly the comprehensive nature of the care, the interdisciplinary approach, which is also very preferable to our health care workers.

I want to acknowledge that in the Etobicoke North community of the honourable member, there's a very substantial investment going on of expanding community health centres into some communities that really need the help. One added feature of the community health centres that is sometimes passed over is their social development capacity, their community development capacity. Those community health centres also have the opportunity to build on the Pathways to Education initiative, which isn't just about health care but about improving the nature of the community and enhancing opportunities for progress for many Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Interjections: He gets a supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary, the member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I'm sure my constituents in the riding of Etobicoke North would like to know from the minister how the McGuinty government will continue to address barriers to primary health care in my riding of Etobicoke North. For example, in July 2006 our government awarded the Rexdale Community Health Centre two satellites, one in the James Town area and one in the Kipling-Dixon area, as part of the overall community health centre expansion plan. Could the minister tell this House what the impact is and what your vision is of such satellites across Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: It was interesting to see the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock wanting to stand up and ask a question, because for eight and a half years no one in that party wanted to stand up for CHCs, and as they were developing their platform no one wanted to stand up for health care because they were proposing a further \$3-billion cut, because the Tories like to do things the same.

In the Etobicoke North community, two new satellites are coming to life. These will help communities like the Somali community at Kipling and Dixon and the South Asian community—very prominent in that part of On-

tario. We think it's important to continue to build these capacities in communities.

With respect to the honourable member, who is a medical doctor, I want to applaud him for the efforts he has been involved in as a doctor from the South Asian communities, working with those communities, especially to highlight the particular risks of cardiovascular disease, which are far more prevalent among South Asians. Community health centres are a very good example of how we can address very particular community challenges on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis.

RAIL SERVICE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The recent federal budget announced funding for commuter rail service between Peterborough and downtown Toronto, which includes stops in rural and urban communities along the way. Minister, do you support a commuter rail line running from Peterborough to Toronto?

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Would you like me to ask it again?

To the Minister of Transportation: Do you support a commuter rail service running from Peterborough to Toronto?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It was an interesting proposition. When people made telephone calls to officials to find out what it was all about, there didn't appear to be any answers forthcoming. We heard about it, subsequent to the budget. I've spoken to our good friend over here—can I use his name?—Jim Flaherty. I spoke to him. I was with him this morning at an event, and we were chatting about many things. But we haven't had any detail at all as to how this would work or what the proposal was. So we await detail. When we receive the detail—

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: You're getting prompted by Mr. O'Toole. Mr. O'Toole is giving her the answer now.

When we get the kind of detail that is needed, we will be able to evaluate the project as it should be evaluated—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Minister, this has been talked about in the Peterborough area for 20 years that I can remember. I'm sure the member from Peterborough has a lot of information, but if you need more, we can send it over to you. If you didn't hear the first part of my first question, it was announced in the federal budget.

We've heard transportation announcements for urban Ontario. Are you saying there's no plan for transportation for people in rural Ontario—just urban Ontario? You know the growth that has occurred in the Peterborough, Kawartha and Durham regions. This is good for the people and for the communities; it's good for the environment; it's good for the economy, the infrastructure, the municipalities and the people it affects.

Minister, we'll get you as much information as you need. The member from Peterborough is already on

record as supporting the train service; I certainly support the train service; we're waiting for you. Do you support the commuter rail service from Peterborough to Toronto?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think the member is correct in saying that information has to be provided. As I say, when officials called officials, nobody seemed to know what it was all about. There seemed to be some free-lancing.

Interjections: No, no.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's unfair of me.

I can understand why my good friend and fellow Irish-background person, Jim Flaherty, would want it to go through the north end of his riding. I understand that very much. I have a good deal of respect for federal and provincial members of the House.

What I have to tell you is that when I was at the ROMA convention—the Rural Ontario Municipal Association—along with Good Roads, I heard many pleas from people in the rural areas. They would have suggested that their pleas were more important than the initiative that was discussed. I'll have to check with all of your members who are from rural areas to see if they think it's a priority.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question for the Premier. Does the Premier believe that elementary schools play a significant role in sustaining a vibrant community?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes. It is self-evident by our actions in the last four years that we believe education is a cornerstone of our democracy, a cornerstone of our communities. We have put more than \$4 billion into education: nearly 9,000 new teachers and upwards of 5,000 support workers. We have provided smaller class sizes for our youngest students. Our commitment in our platform to extend the learning day for four- and five-year-olds, to increase homework help and to continue to provide resources for grades 4 to 8 students demonstrates that we are committed to our publicly funded education system in our rural communities, in our urban communities, across the province.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The question is back to the Premier. In Hamilton, 17 Catholic schools and dozens of public schools are on the chopping block as we speak. The bottom line is that these schools are in some of our most vulnerable downtown neighbourhoods. The McGuinty government promised not to close any more schools a couple of years ago. In fact, they have policies that speak about encouraging growth in our older urban centres; that's their policy.

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Will the Premier explain why his government is sitting on the sidelines when closing schools goes against so many purported sustainability goals of his government? Will he step in and stop these school closures immediately?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It would in fact be irresponsible for any government to tie the hands of local school boards to make decisions for their communities. We believe in local school boards. We believe in the efficacy of school boards.

The issue confronting 60 of 72 boards in this province is declining enrolment. The fact is that our province is showing a demographic shift, and the reality is that we have put policy guidelines in place in order to allow boards to make the decisions that make the most sense for their communities.

I'm sorry that the member opposite has no faith in the trustees and the school boards in her community. The reality is that we have to work with our school boards. They understand what's going on in their communities and we need to continue to put resources in place—\$4 billion over the last four years. In the face of declining enrolment, we have continued to increase funding and we will continue to do that.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Recent statistics show that more than a quarter of a million people in this province earn the minimum wage or less. That's about 5% of our population, and of that 5%, almost 60% are women. The minimum wage earners work mostly in the accommodation, food service and retail trade sectors. Minister, can you tell us please and explain to us what you are doing to support those people?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I ask the NDP caucus to come to order, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would like to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for that question and for his advocacy on behalf of Ontario workers, not only over the last number of months but over the last number of years. I thank him for that. He's worked very, very hard.

I'm proud of what this government is doing and has done to make a difference in the lives of Ontario's lowest-paid and most vulnerable workers. As members in the House may know, on March 31 our minimum wage will indeed be going up again another 75 cents. It will be going up from \$8 to \$8.75. This government, since we've taken office, has taken the minimum wage in this country from among the lowest in Canada to the highest, as of March 31. That's something we're very proud of, something that we believe will help vulnerable workers right across this province.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you, Minister, for your work on behalf of all the people in the province of Ontario. I know that people in my riding of London—Fanshawe are going to like this news because it's going to make a positive result in their lives. But we have some kind of concern from business people. They told us they are not able to absorb this increase. Can you tell us how you can deal with this issue, Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I said earlier, we're proud that the McGuinty government has indeed moved Ontario from among the lowest minimum wages in the country to right up to the very top. At the same time, key to doing this has been the fact that we've done it in a balanced, gradual yet decisive way, ensuring that small businesses have ample notice in time to adjust to these additional cost pressures.

That stands in stark contrast to the approach that the NDP want to take. They talk about wanting to protect jobs in this province, yet they advocate a policy that would hurt the very people that we're trying to help. The balanced approach that we're taking is the right approach for the province, it's the right approach for vulnerable workers across this province, and it's the right approach for our economy.

HOME HEALTH CARE SUPPLIES

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Minister of Labour. On March 3, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board changed their purchasing policy so that many independent health care suppliers are effectively shut out from supplying WSIB clients with medically necessary home health care products such as wheelchairs and ostomy supplies. All these purchases now need to be made at one of only three approved preferred suppliers. This policy shift severely reduces accessibility to the products for those that need them, particularly in rural and northern Ontario. It is also negatively impacting on small business in rural Ontario like Professional Mobility and Medical Supplies in Simcoe, Ontario. What are this government and this minister going to do to make sure that people who need medically necessary products and supplies and live in rural Ontario can get them in a timely and effective manner?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I thank the member for the question. I also thank the member from Niagara Falls for bringing this question up at an earlier date. It has given me an opportunity to sit down with the chair of the WSIB and discuss this particular issue. The WSIB has informed me that they've developed this purchasing policy that provides better customer service for injured workers and at the same time saves money for the system as a whole, which we know is paid for by employers across this province. The WSIB, which is an arm's-length organization of this government, has developed this policy to ensure that workers can access the equipment that they need in the easiest way possible. With this policy, all they need do is now pick up the phone, dial a number and within 24 hours they will have their supplies and equipment delivered. It's a great policy for the workers of this province and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert Bailey: This issue is impacting people all over rural Ontario. To echo the words of the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, if you live in Tobermory right now and are on WSIB and incontinence or ostomy supplies, you have to drive to Barrie to get them—that's

a drive of almost two hours. This policy shift by the WSIB effectively means those products are no longer accessible to people in rural Ontario. Why have you allowed the WSIB to cut people in rural Ontario off from getting these medically important products and supplies?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member opposite is painfully misinformed when it comes to this policy. What this policy does is give injured workers the opportunity to be able to pick up the phone and order equipment and supplies—supplies that they would normally have to get off the shelf. We are not talking about things that need to be fitted. We're talking about supplies that injured workers need. And they need not reach into their pocket like they would've had to under the old policy and pay up front. The WSIB is directly billed through the companies for these particular items. The items will be delivered within 24 hours. It's a better policy for the worker, it's a better policy for the WSIB and those that pay the freight for the WSIB, the employers, because it will save money in the long run. It's a similar policy that veteran affairs has in Canada and similar to the policy used by other workers' compensation boards across the country.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to present this petition presented to me by Mrs. Moira Davidson of Richmond Hill, who collected 817 signatures, at St. Mary Immaculate Church. It reads as follows:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to present this petition from the people from Kingston, and I read:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care

delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

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"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract...."

So they petition the Ontario government to:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and I affix my signature to it.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: I present to you today about 400 signatures which were presented to me during the rally held at Queen's Park on January 16.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the land of the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of great scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for the students of the University of Toronto but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as 'surplus' to its academic needs and subject to sale for development; and

"Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect such a property of historical, scientific and natural significance from being used as commercial development."

I signed the petition.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition that has been signed—I would say "by almost all the people in my riding," but it's not quite that many—by a great many

people in my riding. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre.

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative, intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I agree with the petitioners, and I put my signature on the petition as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We've got a lot of petitions, and we only have eight minutes left. You don't have to read the whole petition. I recognize the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition from the Dundalk Wesleyan Church, and I'll be quick.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature....

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to read this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere;...

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the thousands of citizens in my riding who have signed this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition and affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to read this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that was sent to me by high school student Brianne Westland, who lives in Meadowvale. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital

project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to support this petition, to affix my signature to it and to ask page Fatima to carry it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I agree with that petition and I've signed it.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was prepared by Ed Green, who is a constituent of mine and who has been advocating hard for this cause, so I'm happy to present it on his behalf.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

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"Whereas this disease requires patients' fast access to public washrooms;

"Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

"Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations;

"Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

"We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line."

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature to it, and I give it to page Alexander here with me today.

WYE MARSH WILDLIFE CENTRE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, located in the township of Tay, manages approximately 3,000 acres of environmentally sensitive land which is owned by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas over 50,000 people visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year; and

"Whereas over 20,000 students from across Ontario visit the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre each year, receiving curriculum-based environmental education not available in schools; and

"Whereas the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre receives no stable funding from any level of government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the province of Ontario to establish a reasonable and stable long-term funding formula so that the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre can continue to operate and exist into the future."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Mike Colle: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'll attach my name to this petition in support of the people of western Mississauga.

GYPSY MOTHS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a condensed version of my gypsy moth petition that summarizes:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources immediately fund a gypsy moth spraying program to assist landowners and municipalities attempting to control further gypsy moth infestation."

And under the signatures of Carol Oliver and Chris Wilson of Glanbrook, I affix my signature in support.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 17, 2008, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm splitting my time with my colleague the member for Mississauga South.

It's a privilege and honour to stand up and speak in support of the speech from the throne, which was announced on November 29, 2007. This document is important because it outlines the vision of the government, and it's important to talk about the vision in these circumstances we're facing today. As you know, in North America, in Canada and the United States, we are facing some kind of switch and shift in our economic strategy and our structure of business, companies, and factories. I believe that the economy is shifting toward a more technological economy and more high-tech, instead of a traditional economy. That's why I think this throne speech spoke eloquently and in detail about our vision for the next four years and how our government is going to tackle these issues, because they are very important.

We cannot ignore the present life anymore and just pretend we are doing okay. That's why we have to invest in our future. To invest in our future, we have to invest in our first bases, which are our kids, our children, our students. It's very important to start from the beginning, so that's why our government acknowledges that the future of the province cannot be achieved without investment in our youth, in our children and in our skilled people for the future. That's why in this document there is about \$3.8 billion to be invested in the education system to equip our students and children with the tools they need in order to be able to compete in the future.

As you know, our population is not so huge and so big—it's almost 13 million people. So in order to compete in the global economy, with so many huge

populations in countries like China and India, we have to equip our people with the tools, science and knowledge to be able to maintain the jobs we have in the province of Ontario, to be able to create new jobs. We'll be able to take those jobs in the global market and earn some money and also maintain our economic status.

That's why our Premier and our government took that direction to invest in the schooling system and to invest in colleges and universities, because as you know, this is the time for innovation and research. If we don't compete on the research and innovation level, we will be left behind. Any community, country, province or population that doesn't invest in research and innovation will be left behind in this day and age. That's why we pay a lot of attention to these areas, because we believe strongly that we are able to compete and we're able to achieve our goal and our vision, which will create an economy and create a community able to compete in a global market, with the confidence and ability to score the highest score we can achieve in our lifetime.

We talk about education and highly skilled people. That's why I think we are able to attract many companies to open in the province of Ontario, like Toyota in Woodstock. Two weeks ago, a huge company came from British Columbia. They're called The Original Cakerie and they came to London, Ontario, to open. This company is going to hire more than 400 people. I think that's a good achievement. Also, another company came, from Korea; they're called Hanwha. They're going to invest more than \$171 million in our area, in London.

Why are all those companies coming to Ontario? Not because we're good-looking people—that's not enough for them—but because they believe they can make money. They believe we have the skilled people to provide to their company and factories, and we have the economy. We have the government that can support them and create a safe environment for them. Also, we have the colleges and universities, good health care and a good education system. That's why people are coming to the province of Ontario. This is also a good indication, a vote of confidence in our government and a vote of confidence in our economy.

Investment in education systems alone cannot do it. We also have to recognize, to support and invest in the vulnerable people who live among us, because we cannot walk alone. We have to maximize our capacity. We have to engage all the people among us, whether they're disabled, whether they're people who came just yesterday from different countries to be a Canadian, or whether they're people who for some reason are on the poverty line. So our duty as a government and as a society is to support every person who decides to be an Ontarian to get their maximum capacity, to utilize his or her capacity in order to maintain the beautiful life we're living in the province of Ontario.

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That's why we invested in a poverty initiative. We appointed Minister Deb Matthews to lead a task force, alongside many different ministers and many different members of this House, in order to do research and

studies to see the way and the mechanism that we could achieve our goal, which is to reduce poverty in the province of Ontario.

Yesterday was a good initiative on this track. We invested more than \$100 million in social housing across the province of Ontario. We doubled the support for poor kids who do not have food in their home and go to school on an empty stomach. I believe, we believe and everybody across the whole globe believes they cannot study and they cannot learn when they are hungry. That's why we doubled that investment by \$135 million for an extra three years. I think this is a good initiative toward correcting our track record in the province of Ontario.

We look at giving the poor people among us support, a lift, because we believe strongly that if all of us are working, whether it's people who came yesterday or people who have been living here for years, poor or rich people, people with no education or people with higher education—when we work collectively as a community, we are able to achieve our goal, to achieve our vision.

That's why I am speaking strongly in support of this throne speech, because this throne speech outlines our vision. We had a track record. We governed for four years before, and we proved to the people of Ontario that we were able to deliver. When we promised, we delivered. The people saw our innovations in the education system, our innovations in health care and our innovations in infrastructure. It's great to say things, but it's very important to act. This government is not just saying; it's also acting.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I'm going to leave it to my colleague to continue.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I am honoured to address the Legislature and to deliver my maiden speech.

I am proud to be the 12th elected member of provincial Parliament to represent the good people of Mississauga South. Our community has a rich history. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Mississauga First Nations, who settled in the Credit River area 100 years ago. In 1805, at a meeting in Port Credit, the crown purchased lands along Lake Ontario from the Mississagas, which became known as the Toronto townships. The town of Mississauga was formed by provincial decree in 1968. As a student at Sherway public school, I remember that historic ceremony, which included descendants of the First Peoples. Mississauga South's vibrant waterfront neighbourhood is now cherished for its heritage homes and historical sites, including the original gateway to Toronto, known as the Middle Road bridge, which still stands over Etobicoke Creek today.

Since 1867, 11 members have preceded me in this assembly, such as, most recently, Tim Peterson. As well, the Honourable Margaret Marland served Mississauga South proudly for 18 years, and the Honourable T.L. Kennedy lived in south Mississauga and represented Peel region for 38 years. Their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Mississauga South is my home. It's where my wife, Zenny, and I raise our family. It's where I grew up and

attended local schools. More than 700,000 of us—people from all parts of the world and from every faith—now call Mississauga home, and that number is growing. We are a shining example of the diversity that makes our province, and indeed our country, strong and unique. We are also a community of hope.

My family's story reflects this diversity and hope. In 1953, my father arrived at pier 21 from Portugal. He fled a fascist regime in postwar Europe, because he wanted his family to be free. He came here seeking a better life, and never looked back. He taught my brother and me to be proud of our Portuguese heritage and to stand tall for Canada. I am fortunate that my parents chose Ontario. I am grateful that Ontario accepted them.

My father's deep respect for democracy and his commitment to the community formed the basis of my political development. His love for our province and our country is exemplified by his expression, "There is room for everyone."

That statement formed my belief in a government that nurtures values of hope, prosperity and fairness. We want to continue to be a welcoming society. We want to continue to help those who are less able while building upon our strong economic foundation. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to now acknowledge my father, Mr. Antonio Sousa.

I support the speech from the throne. It is based on the premise of a balanced fiscal approach to build a stronger Ontario. I share this vision. My constituents know that my vision also includes a commitment to five priorities: protecting the environment, addressing gridlock, growing our economy, investing in publicly funded education and safeguarding universal health care.

With more homes and businesses coming to our community, there will be an even greater demand for peak electricity, but we must continue to balance the need for power generation with environmental responsibility that includes conservation and increasing renewable resources. That is why I fully support the efforts of our local ratepayers and community associations in calling for full environmental assessments. But we must go further. Coming from a community that celebrated the demolition of the Lakeview coal plant, I'm especially pleased with this government's continued commitment to close all of the province's coal plants by 2014.

While more power will be needed in Mississauga in the years to come, I believe that our lakefronts and riverbeds must be protected. Our waterfront is a jewel of Mississauga South. It is a source of enjoyment and pride, it is where many businesses thrive and it attracts tourism. Many community leaders have presented a bold vision for the future of Mississauga's lakefront and they have now secured support from the community, this member and city council. Let's not miss this opportunity. We must work to revitalize the villages along the water's edge. The environmental and economic benefits will be enjoyed by everyone in the GTA.

Our government is also committed to improving air quality. The Clarkson airshed study indicates higher levels of ambient air pollution in my community. As part of our government's new infrastructure plan, a light rail

system will be built along two major corridors in the south, and an additional GO line along the Lakeshore will result in quicker and better service. This will help reduce pollution as well as ease gridlock. It will also increase economic prosperity. I am certain that by working together, we can leave a legacy of clean air, green spaces and a vibrant waterfront for our children and future generations. We're fortunate to already have a protected wetland in Mississauga South known as the Rattray marsh, but we have an opportunity to do even more.

Just as acting today to protect the environment is an investment in our future, so too is our investment in education. Coming from a family of teachers, I am often reminded of the challenges facing our education system. While there remains more to do, I commend what our government has done and continues to do to enable more teachers and students to succeed.

I'm a father of three amazing children and, like any parent, I want the best for them. They remain at the heart of my commitment to maintaining and improving our education system in Ontario. It is for my eldest daughter, Cristine, a first-year student at the University of Ottawa, that we work towards ensuring better and more affordable post-secondary education. It is for my son, Justin, that we seek to facilitate mentoring programs and promote greater graduation rates in high schools. It is for my little girl, Jessica, in elementary school, that we strive to improve early education so that all children have a chance to succeed. I proudly speak of my children, and I absolutely speak in favour of this government's belief that every child in Ontario deserves an opportunity to realize their maximum potential.

I wish to recognize my big brother, Julio Sousa, principal of St. Michael Catholic School. He believes that we need to continue making this a priority.

Along with schools, hospitals are among the most important institutions in any community. We are fortunate to have Trillium Health Centre and Credit Valley Hospital.

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We're also investing to better serve and provide for our seniors. Unfortunately, not all of us are as resilient as our youthful mayor, Her Worship Hazel McCallion. At 87 years young, she is Ontario's longest-standing public servant.

I am proud to represent Mississauga South and I am grateful to those who have entrusted me with this responsibility. To truly be successful, one needs the support of others. In that regard, I have been touched by the dedicated efforts of so many, most especially my family. Their energy and encouragement have made this journey one of the most enjoyable experiences in my life. Please join me in recognizing my wife, Zenaida, and my two youngest children, Justin and Jessica. I appreciate their support and understanding, especially when I'm too often away from home.

Mr. Speaker, I have told my constituents, through you, how fortunate I feel to be here. Through you, I now say to them: I will do my very best.

I applaud this government for its vision for Ontario, one that is fiscally responsible, socially and environmentally conscious. I am proud of this throne speech and I will vote to support it.

I conclude with my father's phrase: "There is room for everyone." This also means that there's room for everyone's ideas, ideas that may be very different than mine. I look forward to hearing from all members, on both sides of the aisle, as we strive to do the best we can for the people of Ontario.

Finally, I extend my best wishes to my fellow MPPs, the class of 2007. I look forward to working with all my colleagues to get the job done for all of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: First of all, my congratulations to the member for Mississauga South on his maiden speech.

I would like to add some comments to the speech from the member for London-Fanshawe, who was talking a fair amount about the economy in his speech. I would suggest that the McGuinty government's economic policy of picking winners and losers with their policy of subsidization is not working. You just need to look at comments like those from Don Drummond, the chief economist of TD, who points out, "It's not so far"—Ontario—"from being an equalization province." That's what's happening in this province. We have the slowest private sector job growth in Canada. We have the least competitive tax structure in Canada. And this government keeps creating more and more red tape.

As a small business critic, this is a letter I recently got from a constituent talking about a small shop. I'd like to quote a bit from it as an example of the new red tape being created by this government. I'll just summarize it: "Again, another of our wonderful governmental agencies has managed to complicate manners for the little guy."

"I am presently trying to complete our registration for 2008 (we have been registered for 10-plus years now) and am being asked what chemical properties Safety Clean leaves for us to clean out pump-bearing housings in our shop." As I understand, he's using this product and now has to register as a waste generator. It's a new rule, and even the ministry is recognizing that it's taking too long and has postponed it.

I can't go into all of the details in the 15 seconds I have left. This is the kind of red tape that's really crippling all business in Ontario, particularly small business. We need to reduce red tape, have more competitive corporate taxes, eliminate the capital tax and develop a skilled labour policy in this province.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's an honour to stand and give a couple of minutes' talk about my fellow colleagues from the Liberal Party and what they had to say today.

First of all, to the member for Mississauga South: It was a very nice little inaugural speech. I want to use the word "inaugural" though, and I suggest it's probably more appropriate than the word that was used. But notwithstanding that, the speech touched on all the high points, and I want to commend him and his family for the

support you have given him. This is often a very difficult job. It's a job that takes you away from your family. It's a job that can be quite combative here on occasion. I look forward to hearing more substantial speeches from you in the future because I think in what you had to say today you certainly did try to capture the essence of how we need to work here together.

To my colleague from London–Fanshawe: I listened intently to what you had to say. I only wish that your optimism were well founded in fact. Unfortunately, although there are some good things happening in London, the city you represent is going through very tough times. London has the dubious distinction on this date of being the municipality in Ontario with the fifth-worst unemployment record, a record that continues to go up. Factories continue to leave and, notwithstanding that some new ones have come in, there are far more manufacturers leaving and far more manufacturing jobs leaving than are currently coming in.

You also had good words to say about poverty initiatives—would that were so. We are waiting for the budget next week. But the expectations, I think, will be much higher than the delivery on that date.

Last but not least, you talked about the \$100 million for social housing. It pales in comparison to what is actually needed. The city of Toronto alone estimates they need \$300 million this year to effect the necessary repairs. When you're only giving—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I am most pleased as well to congratulate my two fellow caucus members, the member for London–Fanshawe and my new colleague the member for Mississauga South.

I think we cannot forget that these were two of the most closely watched races in October 2007. It stands in testament to the abilities of the member for London–Fanshawe that he was re-elected as part of the McGuinty team. Clearly, the people in that area were looking at the record of our government's first four years. They felt that our platform, as reflected in this throne speech, was one that they wanted to support wholeheartedly—and an even more interesting situation in Mississauga South, where again it was the McGuinty record that clearly resulted in the reaffirmation of a Liberal member of provincial Parliament elected to represent that riding.

I am very much in support of this throne speech, and both my colleagues have pointed out what a well-balanced, fiscally responsible plan this is. We are also obviously here to listen to our two opposition parties, as the wise owl so clearly asks us to do.

What have I heard over the debate on this particular throne speech from the opposition parties? From the third party I have heard that they value social services, essential public services. They also acknowledge that economic times are tough. However, how do you reconcile the type of reckless spending that they are promoting with these tough economic times?

I support my colleagues and the throne speech.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise and congratulate the member for Mississauga South on his recent election and entree into the Ontario Legislature, and welcome here today his family and friends, who should be very proud of his accomplishment, no doubt, because we all know that the family takes up an increased burden with the demands of the legislative schedule when we're here in Toronto or at events in our own ridings. So they should be congratulated for their support as well on the member's new endeavour here in the Ontario Legislature.

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I enjoyed spending time with the member on the recent finance committee hearings. As he knows—he mentioned it today in his member's statement—the official opposition, including the member for Wellington–Halton Hills and the member for Haldimand–Norfolk–Brant and I, penned a dissenting report to point out concerns that we have about the provincial economy and the harmful economic policies of the Dalton McGuinty government that have chased hundreds of thousands of jobs from Ontario and scared off a lot of potential investment. My view on this is considerably different from that of the member from London–Fanshawe, who spoke a bit earlier. Let me give you a couple of examples; I'll get into it more later on.

Since Dalton McGuinty came to office, only 112,000 private sector jobs have been created. Over four years, the net creation of private sector jobs is barely over 100,000. Across the eight years of PC government, the predecessor government to Dalton McGuinty, private sector jobs expanded by an average of 109,000 per year—per year, Mr. Speaker. So the grand total of Dalton McGuinty, after four or five years in office, is 112,000. The previous accumulation by the PC government was over 109,000 per year—over a million net new jobs created in the province of Ontario. Certainly we hope we will see in the upcoming budget from the finance minister a change in direction to actually make Ontario a friendly jurisdiction for business investment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I return to the member from Mississauga South.

Mr. Charles Sousa: Thank you very much to the members from London–Fanshawe, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Beaches–East York, Oak Ridges–Markham and Niagara West–Glanbrook for their comments.

It is indeed a privilege for me to stand here before you as a colleague, with many of you who have been here longer than I, and I appreciate the insight and the wealth of knowledge that you bring. I also look forward to working closely with all of you to try to do what's best—what I believe is best—for all Ontarians. I know that most of us share those same concerns. Ideologies may be different, but in the end, people's intentions are good. I will work hard to do just that, so we can represent well the people of Ontario and, especially for me, my constituents of Mississauga South.

There are some differences, and we have spoken about them often in this House. But my support for the throne

speech, as well as our positioning for what we believe will be the best way to establish economic stimulus going forward—especially in times as we see them now, it is important for us to be positive and to ensure that we do work together for the benefit of all. With that said, I appreciate this time and thank you all for listening to me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: You know, given that this government has allowed us only eight days in the last 10 months to debate government direction, I am grateful for the opportunity to comment today and to comment on the throne speech, albeit I'm commenting three months after the throne speech was given. This is what happens when a government strays from the parliamentary calendar.

As you know, in the past 10 months—even in the last three—the job and economic indicators have not gotten any better. In fact, we continue to see the downward spiral, and again we hear evidence that Ontario, once the economic engine of Canada, has become one of the slowest-growing provinces across the Dominion of Canada. Ontario's growth in 2007 was the slowest in Canada. That's the first time that has happened since the 1991 recession, and it does beg the question, are the McGuinty government harmful policies now driving Ontario to have-not status? Are the McGuinty government harmful policies now creating in the province of Ontario a status of being one of the so-called equalization provinces?

I have a quote from Don Drummond, with the TD Bank Financial Group. He states that Ontario's economic performance does bring it closer to federal government handout status: "It's not so far from being an equalization province." Another quote, from Douglas Porter, deputy chief economist with BMO, Bank of Montreal: "While the arcane equalization calculation may still peg Ontario officially as a have province, the reality is far less friendly for the provincial economy. Ontario is becoming relatively poorer each year."

Now, to be clear, Canada itself is going through a period of global economic uncertainty. The combination of the stronger dollar, a slowing US economy, higher energy prices and increased competition from emerging markets—obviously China, for one—has posed significant challenges for our national economy. However, when you look at the impact on the economy in the province of Ontario, particularly the manufacturing sector, we see what seems to be an ever-increasingly serious situation.

While other provinces have adapted to these challenges through forward-looking economic policies, the present Ontario government has pursued what we consider an outdated agenda: an agenda of higher taxes, an agenda of bigger government, increased red tape, and higher energy prices by reducing supply, of all things. Put simply, we now have evidence that Ontario is becoming the economic laggard of Confederation.

We know, and history has shown, that a competitive tax environment is one of the key factors that will attract

the scale of business investment that we need and will also attract the quality of business investment that we need. Despite that fact, the present government continues to rake in unprecedented revenue from taxes. Tax revenues very clearly have skyrocketed by \$17.3 billion. That's since fiscal year 2003-04. That's a 35% increase in tax revenue. In fact, probably one of the very first bills this government brought in was legislation to implement the largest tax increase in the history of Ontario. Clearly, this government does not understand that its fiscal and tax policies, for example, have hurt capital investment in industry. When you hurt capital investment in industry, that has a direct linkage with job creation—or, more appropriately, job loss—and has a direct correlation with productivity.

Taxes have a dramatic impact on where businesses choose to locate. Capital tax—and our finance critic, Tim Hudak, has mentioned this—is a prime example. In periods of economic slowdown, when businesses are losing money, they have to search for other ways to cut costs. When you have a very high capital tax compared to other jurisdictions with which you are trying to compete, you're in a situation where you have to cut in those areas. That gives you the flexibility, unfortunately, to make reductions in purchases of plant and equipment, machinery and equipment. In economic downturns, capital tax leads to greater job losses. That's essentially the bottom line. We've seen this scenario play out across the province of Ontario in the last several years. As a result, these kinds of misguided economic policies are driving Ontario toward a have-not status. It's now increasingly possible, as I said, for Ontario to become an equalization province.

As opposition, we cannot sit by and watch as this government's misguided policies sell our economy down the drain. As such, during the pre-budget sessions in the finance committee, as you will know, Speaker, we have an opportunity to put forward motions to address some of these competitive issues, motions including an immediate elimination of the capital tax, lowering the corporate income tax rate and phasing out the health tax. However, these motions regrettably were voted down by the Liberal-dominated standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

As we now know, Ontario has lost 183,500 high-paying manufacturing jobs since 2005. In 2007 alone, Ontario lost 64,000 manufacturing jobs. That's a 6.5% drop in manufacturing employment since 2007. According to Statistics Canada, compared to other provinces—and this is important—Ontario has suffered the greatest loss of manufacturing jobs in Canada since January 2005. That's not only in real terms but also as a percentage measure of manufacturing employment. It does get worse. According to the TD Bank, Ontario could experience a further job loss of 250,000 over the next half-decade.

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I should note as well that the single biggest weakness in Ontario's manufacturing, certainly in comparison to

the United States, is this underinvestment in plant and equipment, this underinvestment in machinery and equipment. Capital investment in Ontario's manufacturing sector has decreased since 2003 and has decreased the most in Canada, again in both real and percentage terms. Again, why? Our position, and we tried to make this clear during the pre-budget hearings, is that corporate income taxes are too high in the province of Ontario and capital taxes are too high in the province of Ontario. Given this information, we in the opposition made recommendations to the Minister of Finance, one of them being to lower the corporate income tax rate for all businesses in Ontario, to help foster investment. Part of the rationale is that all the other provinces in Canada are moving forward with cutting business taxes, not only corporate income taxes but also capital taxes, to stimulate job creation.

Here in Ontario, our businesses, our industries, have one of the highest marginal tax rates, and we feel that this is perhaps one of the more important measures, given some of the economic data and information that we received as we travelled around the province of Ontario on the finance committee. We visited the Soo, Guelph, Timmins.

Given this government's track record, the forecast for the present year is not sunny. We heard from Scotiabank in our finance committee. Economic growth forecasts for the current year have ranked Ontario dead last. In 2007, Ontario's growth rate was the slowest anywhere in Canada, and according to nearly all the bank estimates, Ontario hasn't sunk this low since the recession in 1991. We did hear testimony. There were obviously questions relating to the US economy. Some in the United States are using the R word, flirting with a sub-prime mortgage lending recession, as we know, and potentially—there was an announcement yesterday of a recent bank collapse, Bear Stearns. This is the fifth-largest investment bank in the United States, and essentially they're now out of business. What does this bode not only for Canada, but more particularly for the future of our economy in the province of Ontario?

Locally, in my riding, people are concerned. We have some localized economic troubles. I'm referring particularly to our farm economy, whether it be hogs, beef and, in particular, tobacco. The devastation to the economy of Haldimand county—we're now going into a third year of Six Nations-generated blockades and occupations. This afternoon I made mention of the Haudenosaunee Development Institute blockade at 6 o'clock this morning which brought a \$10.5-million hotel project to its knees in the city of Brantford.

One other factor with respect to—whether it's business corporate taxes or whether it's the capital taxes that business has to pay on plants and machinery, it's not only business and work, and industrial and economic activity involving goods and services. Primarily, we're talking about jobs, and for the first time in 30 years, Ontario's unemployment rate is now exceeding the national average. Again, all five major banking institutions predict

that the unemployment rate will continue to rise not only this year but throughout 2009. This is why we in opposition felt it was important to put forward another motion in the finance committee to eliminate the job-killing capital tax, and to eliminate this tax immediately.

Just by way of explanation, many economic studies consistently show that capital taxes are probably the most inefficient form of taxation. It's a direct tax. It's paid year after year on money that companies have invested in capital. It's a tax that must be paid whether that company is making money or not. Few jurisdictions use this tax. Most of our competitors do not have a significant capital tax, if any at all. So with respect to this tax alone, the capital tax, Ontario is at a competitive disadvantage. Economists complain that capital taxes are punitive to investment in a context where increasing our productivity remains probably the most significant challenge that our economy is facing.

So, as I have tried to explain, the capital tax discourages investment, flies in the face of any measures that we should be bringing in right now to attempt to encourage investment, and certainly to encourage capital investment. Yet we have a government today, and reflected in that Liberal majority on the finance committee, that voted down our motion to immediately eliminate the capital tax.

Interjection.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It is curious, and I know our finance critic echoes my sentiments by saying, "Shame." I think that pretty well summarizes it.

It's curious that this government refuses to acknowledge the signs of economic downturn. Ontario's economic growth, first of all, is below the national average. Our manufacturing sector is bleeding jobs and we're losing a record number of people to other provinces. Again, this is another dismal measure of Ontario's economic progress, or lack thereof. All major economic indicators have Ontario lagging the rest of the country, and this is right across the board.

This province does need initiatives on a number of fronts:

(1) This province needs the elimination of the capital tax. That's for all business, and that would be implemented immediately.

(2) We need a reduction of the corporate income tax rate; bring it down, at minimum, to a competitive level and provide some tax relief for small business.

(3) We need a government that will put this province back on the right track by setting and committing to real targets to reduce the regulatory burden on all businesses. Again, I'm talking about the plethora of rules, regulations, red tape and forms to fill out, the kinds of things that really do not make being in business a lot of fun.

(4) Provide some tax relief for hard-working Ontario families.

(5) Begin serious consultations with Ottawa on the subject of tax reform.

(6) We must address the energy crisis, including a responsible plan with respect to coal power, and make

use of existing technology. Do not compromise our future energy supply.

(7) The province of Ontario needs to develop a strategy to address what is clearly a looming labour shortage.

While the government members of the finance committee did introduce a motion recognizing the growing unemployment problem, the motion really did not go far enough. As I've said, for the first time in 30 years Ontario's unemployment rate is exceeding the national average. It's a bit of a dismal statistic, and it would serve the Premier well as he goes to Ottawa and asks for fairness for Ontario workers, to ask in the context of that statistic.

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As I have made mention, 183,500 manufacturing jobs have been lost since the beginning of 2005. If we look at our problems from a national perspective, given the growing tough times with respect to the Ontario economy, people are on the move. They're leaving this province. They are heading elsewhere in Canada. The reason they are leaving: lack of employment. The reason they are going to other provinces: They can pick up work. Ontario has reported a net loss of over 30,000 people to other provinces. This is just in the past year. Since the third quarter of 2003, Ontario has lost people to the other provinces, amounting to a net decline of well over 64,000 people in the last three and a half years.

While this government is quick to point to a federal perspective regarding Ontario's economic woes, we must be cognizant that it is provincial policies—I'm talking about provincial policies, not federal policies—that have contributed to Ontario's plight by degrading the investment climate.

We have seen headlines in the media regarding provincial policies scaring off US investment. I think of the fairly recent McGuinty-Flaherty debates. Clearly, in these already tight times, we certainly do not want any kind of situation where Ontario's Premier is scaring off US investment, because again, that does translate into job losses and impacts not only Ontario; it impacts the whole country. I guess one measure, and we can measure this in the future, is more people drawing unemployment.

Speaker, as you will know, while we were on the pre-budget tour we found the government was fond of speaking in generalities, essentially, about the next generation of jobs. They talk about making strategic investments—pretty vague stuff. I'm just not sure what they are planning on doing or who would receive the money in the future. But one way to sustain jobs in the short run, I guess, from their line of reasoning, is to use tax dollars. We saw this with the former NDP administration and now with the provincial Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It's a delight to be able to comment on the address made by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I know folks watching listen to him, as I have for the last 20 minutes, and look at his rather

controlled style, but I want to assure you that inside he is bubbling over with passion.

I'm very familiar with his riding. He has surely been blessed with being able to represent one of the finest pieces of Ontario. I mean, you're traveling west on Highway 3, you hit Highway 6; just south of Highway 3 on the east side is Nigh's meat shop. They've got a good smoker, good sausage. Travel down south to Port Dover, which I believe is a part of this member's riding. He's blessed to have that in his riding. Erie Beach Hotel—platters of perch, fresh Lake Erie perch. Eat until you can't eat any more. And if you want, you can travel up north on Highway 6 and come pretty close to where the Speaker hangs his hat. Keep going and you end up on Manitoulin Island; Elliott Lake; one of the great historic highways of Ontario from the lake shore, from the ports—Port Dover, in this instance—all the way up into northern Ontario to mining country.

My colleague the member for Beaches-East York, Mr. Prue, has been patiently doing House duty with me this afternoon, even though he is not going to be able to speak to the throne speech today. He will be addressing the comments by the member from Haldimand-Norfolk in a few more minutes. And in a few more minutes, I'll have my chance to speak to the throne speech for a modest 20 minutes. That's all the rules allow us. I'm looking forward to it, because I know there's a great deal of latitude provided when a member of this assembly addresses the throne speech. I intend to utilize that leeway. I look forward to the opportunity. I ask folks to be patient. In a few more minutes I'll have the floor again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is always a pleasure to follow the honourable member from Welland. It is my pleasure again to stand and speak in support of the throne speech. One of the fundamental reasons I support this throne speech is because it's investing in our biggest asset in this province; that is, our people. Yesterday's announcement on affordable housing is an indication of the kind of thing this government, the McGuinty Liberal government, wants to achieve in this province.

In my riding of Ottawa Centre, affordable housing is a big issue. We need to ensure that we invest in repairing our existing infrastructure—the buildings, the apartments—so that people, the working families, the low-income families living in these buildings, are living in a safe community, in a safe and healthy environment. That's why I'm very proud that the government is investing \$100 million across the province. That means the city of Ottawa alone will be receiving \$8.2 million towards repairing the infrastructure, the affordable housing stock that exists in the city of Ottawa. In fact, tomorrow I will be visiting some community housing in my riding, along with Ottawa Community Housing and local city councillors, to see firsthand where the investment will be made and how lives will be improved in the community.

Similarly, the government's intention to move forward with the dental care program for low-income families by

investing \$132 million over three years is again an important indication that we are investing in our people, in Ontarians, to ensure that they do live in a healthy community. We know that poor dental care can be a stigma for people who are not able to get jobs, who are not able to participate fully in the community. By investing that type of money, people in my community, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, will definitely benefit from the kind of investment this government is making through this throne speech.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to commend my colleague from Haldimand–Norfolk on his outstanding comments with respect to the throne speech and, as he mentioned, on the value of the dissenting report that he helped to craft as a member of the finance committee, along with the member from Wellington–Halton Hills and me as the finance critic. In fact, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk brought forward a number of very sensible motions that would help out his constituents and taxpayers across Ontario. Surprisingly and very unfortunately, those motions I think were entirely voted down.

I will give you some examples of what Mr. Barrett had brought forward. We certainly heard in that committee about the great pain the forest industry has had, not only in northern Ontario but across the province. Mr. Barrett had brought forward a motion to help invest in the forest industry and turn around what has always been an industry of great economic benefit to small and large communities across the province. Now we've seen 5,500 high-paying forestry jobs go. Sadly, the Liberal majority in the committee was whipped into voting down that motion.

Mr. Barrett also brought forward motions with respect to contraband tobacco and seeing better enforcement in that respect—also voted down.

And suitable for his riding, but also of importance in other ridings to seniors and working families concerned with their energy bills and to businesses, particularly the manufacturing sector, Mr. Barrett, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, brought forward an important motion about clean coal technology to make sure that all technologies are investigated, including carbon sequestration, to ensure that we could continue to benefit from all power sources made more green. This is the way I understand that other provinces, states and countries are looking at this type of innovation, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke notes, but unfortunately, again, the whipped members of the committee voted it down.

I congratulate him on his efforts and hope we'll see action on these files.

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the member from Haldimand–Norfolk, I listened intently to what he had to say for some 20 minutes, and time will only permit me to comment on three of the things he raised.

The first was that since this throne speech was given last fall, a great many things have happened, and the economy has not performed perhaps to the liking of the government or perhaps even to the liking of the people of

Ontario. The member astutely and correctly notes that the subprime fiasco in the United States is having its toll on the economy of that country and that that country is our chief trading partner.

He went on to talk about the second thing, which was the collapse of Bear Stearns in the last couple of days, and how many people lost not millions but billions of dollars in equity with the collapse of that institution and that the United States government, for the first time in many, many years, has been forced to step in with a \$30-billion guarantee in order to guarantee the assets, no longer part of the Bear Stearns portfolio.

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These are things that we need to bear in mind when we are looking at the upcoming budget. We are debating the last economic statement and the last throne speech where the government was headed, but I want to spend my last few seconds talking about the pre-budget tour, which he also touched on.

We were on that pre-budget tour. That pre-budget tour, I have to tell you, was one of the saddest times I have ever had as a parliamentarian from this Legislature. We heard—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not because of the company.

Mr. Michael Prue: Not because of the company but because 175 individuals and groups came forward to make, in person, deputations before the committee and another 100 sent in written submissions of what they wanted the committee to talk to the finance minister and the Legislature about in terms of improving the budget and, I guess, the throne speech, and not one of their recommendations—not one of the 275—saw the light of day inside this institution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You have two minutes to reply, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I thank the MPP from Welland for his comments. I'm looking forward to him having his chance, as he says, to comment. I plead guilty. It was a fairly controlled presentation—economic facts and figures. That may be why they refer to it as the dismal science. I'm looking forward, in contrast, to a presentation that may well be out of control. So I'll look forward to that—

Mr. Peter Kormos: One should hope so.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I should hope so—to maintain your reputation.

As the member for Beaches–East York knows, some of this is pretty dry stuff. He made mention of listening to me for the last 20 minutes while we've been listening to each other for two weeks on the finance committee. What do they say about economists? What is the expression? I guess, "An economist is essentially an accountant without the charisma." Some of us here have degrees in this stuff. We're trying to get away from it.

Thank you to the member from Ottawa Centre. He talked about human resources and the importance of people. I'd remind him that in our province of Ontario we lost 30,000 people to other provinces in the last year

looking for jobs, and we've lost 183,500 manufacturing jobs. Of course, our finance critic, Tim Hudak, knows a bit about the north and the forest industry. He knows about the red tape, the Ontario government regulations that are helping to bring this industry to its knees, and he knows that the forest industry needs that electricity from Atikokan and Thunder Bay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: It seems like it's been so long since those short 10 days in December 2007.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Only eight.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Maybe it was nine. Maybe it was only eight. It just seems so long, and I'm so pleased to be back. Over those few months, I've grown a little greyer and I've gotten a little fatter. I was listening to the Minister of Health Promotion today in her ministerial statement, a very fit, slim person standing up and talking about nutrition and exercise and fitness. I looked over especially at some of my male colleagues here, pointing out and acknowledging our commonality notwithstanding our political differences, and I said to her, "Yes, Minister, that's easy for you to say," but I suspect there are more than a few of us who would be well advised to heed her advice.

Look, down where I come from, in places like Wainfleet, Port Colborne, Welland and Thorold and St. Catharines and, yes, places like Pelham, which is represented by my neighbour here, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook now—it's a shame that those people got shifted over, but I'm pleased that they're well represented in the Legislature. I do miss them.

Down where I come from, where the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook comes from and the member for St. Catharines and the member for Niagara Falls—that was industrial Ontario. That was the wealth creation in this province, in this country. It was where people worked hard making things—the manufacturing industry—adding value, creating wealth.

You see, you don't create wealth in a casino. Oh, those jobs have become more and more important. We know it; you bet your boots we know it. But you don't create wealth in a casino. You stir the pot and separate people from their wealth.

You don't create wealth—dare I say it?—in most support types of service industries. You're a supplement to the economy, but you're not adding value in the manufacturing process.

We are at great risk. Our future, our economic future, is at incredible risk if we don't move promptly, quickly, immediately, to restore and rebuild our industrial manufacturing base, that wealth-creating part of our economy.

Down in Welland the largest single employer now is a call centre, Canadian Tire Acceptance. I know many of the folks that work there. I know Mr. Hudak knows many of them too. They work hard. They do work hard; make no mistake about it. It's not heavy lifting—you're not out there with a pick and a shovel; you're not tearing out the brick of a furnace—but you're working in a stressful

environment. You're working in an environment where repetitive strain injury appears, especially as workers mature and reach their late 30s, 40s and move into their 50s, and in an industry where most of the workers, for instance, don't have WSIB coverage; they simply don't. And not only is Canadian Tire Acceptance the largest single employer, indeed the call centre industry has become a prominent player in the job market across Niagara, as it has in other parts of Canada.

So imagine my surprise—I've got to put some context in this. I was late coming to the computer world. I was a little late coming to the computer world; in fact, I still use a fountain pen. I feel very comfortable using a fountain pen, and I still feel far more comfortable with a real book, with a binding on it, than I do with a computer screen. But it's been years now that I've used computers here at Queen's Park, at work, and in my office in Welland and at my home. My younger brother, an IT, computer kind of person working here in Toronto, has been hectoring me for as many years about this Luddite tendency, because until this past week I've had but dial-up. I suppose that was fine in the early days of those computers, which not that long ago were pretty slow in and of themselves, but even the most bottom-line entry level computers now are pretty fast machines.

I succumbed to the chiding. I said, "Mark, you're right. It's time to move to high-speed Internet access." I had a dilemma, because I looked up the providers. My television cable is provided by Rogers here in Toronto. I don't know if you've ever had any experience with Rogers Cable, but let me tell you, there are no good stories. There are no good stories. It's incredible—you folks know exactly what I'm talking about—how in the middle of Law and Order, right where the confession is going to happen, the box collapses, and you've got to reset it. It doesn't happen during some rinky-dink—it doesn't happen at four in the morning. It happens right when the confession is coming in Law and Order, right when Mariska Hargitay from Law and Order—you remember her—has got the accused in the little interrogation room and he's ready to spill, and all of a sudden, a grey screen.

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If you phone Rogers, you're on the phone for a good 10, 15 minutes, if you're lucky—and that's on a good day. If you get a person at the Rogers call centre, you're lucky if they keep you on the line. If they do keep you on the line, they'll tell you, "It's so easy to reset your machine yourself." You just crawl down behind the television set and unplug the box—you know what I'm talking about—and then you go through this series of procedures. I say, "Look, I didn't screw up the machine; you did. I'm paying rent. You fix it." And then, of course, they hang up on you.

I was in London at the Conservative mini-convention a couple of weekends ago. I met a whole lot of good folks I have regard for. The only thing that really troubled me was when the leader of the Conservative Party, Mr. Tory, was addressing his people in the

question and answer, and talked about how the party needs a leader with the type of business experience he has and how he would run Ontario the same way he ran Rogers cable. I'm not one to give free advice to Mr. Tory, but for God's sake, John, stop using that analogy. You're not serving yourself well. Rogers has got to be the most customer-unfriendly operation you could ever encounter.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Bell.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, I'm getting there, my friend. Mr. Hudak mentions Bell. Bell and Michael Sabia have a little bit coming over the next 12 minutes too, let me tell you.

So Rogers was not on my short list to get high-speed Internet. I said, "No. You guys have made enough money picking enough people's pockets with crummy cable service that I'm not going to sign up. No, no, no." And this is where we come to call centres—jobs, Canadian jobs.

What's more Canadian than Bell Canada? They use the little singing, dancing beavers in the ad because it's Bell Canada. I get the drift. I'm not so obtuse that it doesn't connect. So I call Bell Canada.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Did you get the beaver?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Oh, I got the shaft. This was three weeks ago. I called Bell Canada. I'm on hold for 15 minutes, and then the line disconnects. I got the Muzak. I call back. Again, 15 more minutes, and I get Muzak.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're a patient man.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, I'm under pressure. Now I want high-speed Internet. Now I want it; I've got to have it; I'm adamant that I'm going to have high-speed Internet; I'm not going to be stuck in the last century.

Mr. John Yakabuski: How's your blood pressure?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The member from up there in Renfrew asks. He knows what my blood pressure was like.

Finally—honestly, I'm on the phone for two and a half hours talking, and finally I get connected to a service rep, and where am I talking to—Bell Canada—where am I talking to? New Delhi. That's not Delhi, down in Mr. Barrett's riding, down there on highway 3—I know Delhi. This is New Delhi, India.

And look, please, I have no qualms; of course people in other parts of the world have to have jobs and deserve work and decent jobs and good-paying jobs too. But it just blew my mind and rotted my socks that I'm ordering Bell Canada high-speed Internet and I'm talking to a service rep in New Delhi. I waited until the next week for delivery of my modem, and when I didn't get the modem, I called Bell back again—this time, a call centre in the Oshawa area—and was informed that I had never been hooked up to Bell high-speed Internet, which is why I didn't have my modem. So we went through the whole process again.

There is more to the story: another credit card transaction, more waiting. I get the Bell modem, hook it up, and by God if it doesn't work. But you have to put filters on the lines to your phones. Bell provides the filters for

the cable hook-ups, but for wall phones, you have to go to their website and order special wall phone filters; otherwise, you have to disconnect your wall phone. So the wall-phone in my kitchen is on my kitchen floor now. It can't operate because I can't use the high-speed Internet if the wall phone doesn't have a filter. And, be damned, when I went to the website there was no place to find the wall filter. It wasn't where the guide book said it was. I finally phoned Bell and they assured me it's in the mail.

Michael Sabia, as a matter of fact, is from St. Catharines—high-priced, well-paid, CEO of Bell Canada. You're too young, but I remember back in the 1960s Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*. Do you remember that? It was a fantastic marketing ploy because the big title was *Steal This Book*—

Mr. Michael Prue: And most were stolen.

Mr. Peter Kormos: And Michael Prue would know that most were stolen. He may even have a copy.

Abbie Hoffman, of course, was the renegade hero to so many of us in that little counterculture movement in the 1960s, back when I not only had hair with colour but with length and substance.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I've seen the pictures.

Mr. Peter Kormos: That's right.

If you were really hard-core, there was *The Anarchist Cookbook*. What it had was ways of sabotaging Bell, and it was primitive stuff. It was like plugging the coin slots in a pay phone.

The problem is, I'm looking for an updated digital version of *Steal This Book*. I dearly would love to find a way to sabotage Bell to pay them back for the pain that they've inflicted on so many others. The problem is that in a digital world you can't plug the coin slots with Krazy Glue. There is no way of reversing the flow.

So all I can say to you is this: I've got high-speed Internet—oh, by the way, the e-mail doesn't work because Bell Sympatico doesn't support Microsoft Entourage. We're not talking about some obscure e-mail software that some kid is manufacturing on a bootleg disc; we're talking about Microsoft Entourage, which, I trust people will agree, is a pretty good e-mail application for a home user. Bell Sympatico won't support it. So I've got high-speed Internet and my wall phone is on the floor, so that means I can't receive voice mail and things like that, and I've got no e-mail access; I've got to use the mail part of Apple. And although I love Apple and it's wonderful, the mail software is really less than desirable.

Here's my colleague from St. Catharines, who is well aware of my concern about the gouging of the public of Ontario by the cable television industry and by Bell Canada. Again, talk about an ineffective, toothless, meaningless CRTC. When are they going to get the courage to rein these operators in and protect consumer interests? And when are we as consumers going to start insisting that if we're going to have companies that identify as Canadian, like Bell Canada, we darn well expect that their employees are going to be based here in

the country and that those jobs are going to stay in this country?

You recall that I took some heat from some of the Liberal backbenchers when I was criticizing the Premier's junket to India—remember that, Mr. Hudak?—

Mr. Tim Hudak: I remember that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: —and wondering what in the Lord's name the junket was going to market to India that was manufactured in Ontario, because I don't know. But I don't think there is a big market for those Ford Crown Vics that CAW workers make at Ford down in St. Thomas. Do you know the ones I'm talking about? I just don't think there's a big market for those in India, or in most of Asia, for that matter. I don't even think there's a big market, although there should be, for the Impala or the Accent that comes out of the great GM plant in Oshawa.

So when I'm talking to a call centre in New Delhi about getting my Bell Sympatico hooked up, I'm wondering if that call centre was one of the things that the Premier on his trade junket established in India while he was touring the land with his backbenchers.

As usual, I find time fleeting. I've just got to warn folks. These companies, these anonymous corporations, that hide behind call centres are the most abusive, anti-consumer, non-consumer-friendly entities that have ever existed. Consumers have been, in a Pavlovian manner, trained and reprogrammed to put up with them instead of telling them, "No, we're not going to take this anymore."

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It is just incredibly outrageous, when you look at the huge fees that the CRTC permits cable television like Rogers and telephone operators like Bell, and the gouging, the nickel-and-diming—very much like the bank industry's ATM fees and other service fees. It's amazing that that same CRTC that allows these huge fees by gougers and scoundrels like Rogers and Bell Sympatico doesn't, at the same time, provide some modest level of consumer protection.

New Democrats have proposed a job creation program, a job protection plan. We're talking very specifically about tax credits, corporate tax credits, for manufacturing industries investing in upgrading their manufacturing machinery; talking about enhancing those tax credits when the machinery is green or designed to produce green products; talking about a Buy Ontario policy.

I come from down in Niagara, where we grow a lot of peaches and pears and apples and, of course, our great vineyards. We've got a company down there called CanGro, American-owned now, that's announced it's going to shut down. You know what's going to happen? It means that 1,000 acres of peach production and 600 acres of pear production will become obsolete. There will be no market for those farmers on their acreage. There's none. They might as well plough her under. Funding for new crops? What new crops? Who's going to protect the next crop?

CanGro, then, proposes to use its American plants to process and can everything from Chinese to South American fruit and vegetable products, and they get away with marketing it as a product of Canada.

I was in the factory—great workers, great management, great company; it has been there for decades. My grandmother worked there. A whole lot of immigrant people worked in that factory. Back in the old days, it was very manual labour, with hard-working, dedicated personnel, and their jobs are going to disappear. Not only are their jobs going to disappear, hundreds of those jobs, but also the fruit farmers who produced, in this instance, peach and pear, are going to disappear. All the greenbelts in the world won't protect that land anymore, will they, Mr. Hudak?

Mr. Tim Hudak: No.

Mr. Peter Kormos: You can have all the greenbelt legislation you want, but if you aren't giving the farmers an opportunity to grow product on their land, to grow produce at a modest profit level, then forget about any sort of legislative or regulatory production. We lose that valuable, scarce farmland.

New Democrats will focus on this issue, along with issues of seniors and long-term care, along with issues around poverty, on a daily basis over the course of the next four years. We will do everything we can within our power to hold this government's proverbial feet to the blazing fire because the people of Ontario deserve no less and because we, in this NDP caucus, are committed to nothing else than to standing up, speaking up and speaking out, for seniors, workers and the poorest in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Brownell: It's a pleasure to have a little time this afternoon to speak in the throne speech debate.

Certainly, what we have as a result of the throne speech is an ambitious plan that follows the plan that we had previously, in previous throne speeches, where we tackled issues in health care, in education, in our rural communities. Coming from a very large rural riding, I know that we had much in those throne speeches on infrastructure and assistance to farmers etc.

We intend to, with this throne speech, build strong public services that families across this province have been wanting, and certainly wanting a government to deliver. During the past four years we delivered, and now we're into this new throne speech, with many, many opportunities to look at issues such as poverty, and that's just one that I'd like to comment on this afternoon.

In my own riding, the city of Cornwall has an individual, Mehroon Kassam, who has been tasked with a local poverty reduction strategy. That will certainly help us and certainly pay dividends as we work.

It's great to see that the Honourable Deb Matthews, the Minister of Children and Youth Services, has been tasked with the opportunity to look at poverty and the opportunities for us to tackle the situation of, especially, children living in poverty.

There are many, many other aspects; for example, the greening of Ontario, going to the next generation of green technologies. I look at Liquiforce, a new company in my riding, which is set up to look at municipal in-ground infrastructure, and that will be new technology.

These are the things that I'm quite anxious to see and look forward to working with the government on.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Welland for his insightful and erudite comments on the budget and the economy, as we see it as well. He raised many issues that I have an interest in as well, and many of my colleagues on this side of the House spoke to those today.

I also come from the manufacturing sector, where we've been affected by layoffs, downsizings. We also feel that the government needs to do more to create the economic climate in this province to see that those jobs that are here remain here and we can also attract new investment, as we need in the Welland and St. Catharines area as well as Niagara, Glanbrook and Sarnia-Lambton, obviously, and the rest of the province.

He said that he'd been accused of being a Luddite in the past, and I said I'd watched him for many years before I entered this august assembly and I never found him to be a Luddite or a troglodyte—there's another word; I thought I'd throw that in.

Anyway, he said that he was worried about Rogers Cable, when he was having trouble dealing with them and he said he had trouble finding his modem. Well, I suggest that maybe he lost that modem but he hasn't lost his mojo.

In wrapping up, I'd like to say that we'd like to see on this side of the House, on the Progressive Conservative side, that balance in the private sector as well and see that those taxes, business taxes and taxes to individuals, be reduced so that people will consider reinvesting in Ontario so that Ontario can still remain the province of opportunity, not become a have-not province, as is being cited in some newspaper writings. We intend to work, as well, to hold the government to account in the coming days.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to give two minutes' comment to my colleague from Welland. I listened intently to his speech. I wish all members had done so, because as I heard some of the questions and comments, particularly from one speaker—he never once referred during his two minutes to anything that my colleague from Welland had to say.

What I found most impressive is how he spent about 15 minutes talking about his own personal travails, his own difficulty with these multinational corporations and the frustration I think that every single consumer in this province has felt, not once, not twice, but sometimes hundreds of times in trying to deal—"I'll put you on hold, sir." You'll be on hold, and then the computer comes on and tells you there will be an approximately 15-minute to 35-minute wait. Sometimes it's long distance and you have to pay for it. Sometimes you have other things to do in your life, and you try to put your

phone on speakerphone. You wait and you wait and you wait and then, inevitably, at least one quarter of the time, exactly what happened to him—somebody hangs up. So it's a really good thing to hear that these experiences are universally shared. Perhaps the government should be looking at bringing back some kind of consumer protection. I don't remember seeing anything like that in the throne speech.

In his final couple of minutes, he touched all the high points. He touched the high points of job creation, job protection. He talked about the plight of our farming community, particularly in southwestern Ontario, where many of the fields are no longer productive or many of the families have gone out of business. He talked about the protection of the poor. He talked about the pensioners and the people who need the support and who will get the support of the NDP caucus. I commend him for his speech and listened intently. As always, it combined both humour and human interest. He brought it all poignantly to the end, and I commend him for what he had to say.

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Mr. Bill Mauro: It's my pleasure to rise today and add my two minutes in support of our government's throne speech. In fact, it's a very easy thing for all of us on this side of the House to do. This throne speech, like others before it over the course of the last four years; like our budget speeches, like our major policy decisions that we've made on this side of the House over the last four and a half years—all of us, I think, find it very easy. I think most people in the province understand that the priorities that we lay out in our throne speeches, the priorities that we lay out in our budget documents and our major policy decisions within individual ministries greatly reflect the needs, the will and demands of the people of Ontario. We have been doing that for four years. The throne speech that we brought in before Christmas is a continued reflection of our ability as a government, as a Liberal government, to understand what it is that people in the province of Ontario are looking for and what they want.

When we came to government for the first time, fully four and a half years ago, in October 2003, we had a bit of a mess, as has been acknowledged. We remember three major deficits that existed in the province. There was a fiscal deficit of \$5.6 billion. We remember in the run-up to that election how it was trotted out on every occasion that the budget was balanced, even though they were selling for \$3 billion highways that were valued at \$8 billion. When we were told that the budget was balanced, we ended up finding a \$5.6-billion deficit, a fiscal mess that we inherited. I'm very proud of the fact that we've now balanced that budget and have created the fiscal capacity in this province to do some of the things that are our priorities. We also found a services deficit and made major strides in addressing the services deficit. We heard today how there are 9,000 more teachers working in this province than there were four and a half years ago today. And of course the big one, infrastructure as well, another big one: major investments have been made in infrastructure.

For my part, it's very simple for me to stand here today and support this throne speech and continue to reflect the priorities of the people of the province of Ontario. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. The member for Welland has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, of course it's easy for government members to support the throne speech. They are in the government caucus and if they didn't support it, they would be thrown out of the caucus. Then they wouldn't have their jobs as ministers or parliamentary assistants or committee chairs, all that sort of stuff. Heck, we expect government backbenchers to support the throne speech; that's what they are paid to do.

What I say to you is that the denial of the depth of the crisis out there puts us in a very, very serious prospect of very, very serious consequences. This isn't a little passing transition. This isn't hula hoop factories becoming obsolete. This is an all-out gutting of industrial manufacturing in Ontario. Look, will Ontarians continue to survive because of their nature, their tenacity, their strength and sense of community? Of course, they will survive. But I tell you, Speaker, and you know this darn well: When a community that has enjoyed high-wage salaries and incomes, all of a sudden, because of the closure of factory after factory, becomes a mid-to-low-wage income community, that community changes dramatically. People's lives change dramatically. When you're making \$10, \$12, \$15, \$16 an hour, you're not buying new homes, new cars, new furniture, you're not sending your kids to college and university. And you're not saving for retirement, because when you're making \$10, \$12, \$16 an hour, you probably don't have a pension plan either.

The Ontario that is being designed and engineered by the McGuinty Liberals is not the Ontario that your parents and mine struggled so hard to build, be it as young immigrants or as the children or grandchildren of immigrants. And, by God, it's our job to stop the government now and get it back on track.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is a pleasure to respond to the speech from the throne for the 39th Parliament. I'd like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough Southwest. I'd like to talk about some of the real drivers of economic growth, some of the things that really propel development in Ontario and what a difference investing in those things that matter to Ontarians makes to our province and to my city of Mississauga.

More people come to Ontario from within Canada or from other parts of the world than to any other province or territory within our great nation. Ontario is now, and has historically been, the first place that businesses choose to set up, to invest, to create jobs, to build homes and communities and to grow as business entities.

For a business to be able to grow, it needs good people. Ontario has a workforce second to none anywhere in the world. A business needs access to capital.

Ontario is home to all the leading financial institutions in Canada. Further, through such programs as the next generation of jobs fund, Ontario has joined hands with cutting-edge businesses to grow the knowledge, the jobs and the commercially viable enterprises to continue to be the destination of choice for leading-edge companies, like Satyam of India, which chose Ontario to develop its state-of-the-art information systems in health care management. Satyam chose Ontario and Mississauga because it knew that from Ontario and Mississauga it could invest in the future at Mohawk College in Hamilton.

Companies come to Ontario because of the competitive advantage they gain from our publicly funded health care system. As a rule of thumb, for those familiar with the US system, you look at what you would pay in your health care premium here and then add a zero to it. That's roughly where your US health care costs, after tax, start. In the United States, as some of my friends have told me, they have got features in their health care system that we commonly associate with our car insurance, things like deductibles, limits. We don't have those in our health care system. Canadian workers don't lament the state of their employment and grumble that they can't afford to leave their job because they'd never be able to get health care anywhere else.

Those MPPs whom Ontarians sent to govern them—outstanding individuals like Charles Sousa of Mississauga South who gave his inaugural speech today—share that value, that belief that if you're an Ontarian, you're one of us and we'll all work together to take care of you.

In Mississauga, we grow by about 20,000 people each and every year. Only 23 years ago, we opened what was then a brand new hospital, Credit Valley Hospital, in the middle of a cornfield. Today it's surrounded by homes. Today it's boxed in completely by rapid development in the city of Mississauga. We didn't build Credit Valley Hospital in 1985 with a tax cut. We didn't build the attached regional cancer care centre with a tax cut. We could never have installed three more linear accelerators to keep up with patient demand—all three of those expensive linear accelerators installed ahead of schedule—if we had cut taxes and given away the store.

Today, we stand ready to break ground on phase 2 at Credit Valley Hospital, a decision made on the watch of this government, a decision that our local members lobbied for, worked hard for, a decision that this government made three years ago and we break ground this spring. Phase 2 will add about 140 new beds at Credit Valley Hospital. It's going to enlarge the maternity suite which last year gave birth to nearly 5,500 new Ontarians in a facility designed for only 2,700. Phase 2 will greatly expand our ability to provide complex continuing care to our aging population, and seniors are the fastest-growing demographic in the city of Mississauga. The Credit Valley Hospital Foundation has already raised some \$52 million to meet our community portion of the hospital extension that we so desperately need. Ontario could not meet its 75% share of that new extension with a tax cut.

Our leading-edge companies need that facility. Their people need to know that their employees can receive quality care in Mississauga when and where they need it.

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Ontario is renewing our core of health care professionals as well. We're building a new medical school at the University of Toronto at Mississauga, right in Mississauga. That means that the kids who tell me in grade 5 that they want to be doctors, in schools like Hazel McCallion school or Plum Tree Park in Lisgar, can all study medicine right in Mississauga. It means that at the family medicine teaching unit recently built, attached to the Credit Valley Hospital, those same kids who grow up in Streetsville or Meadowvale or Lisgar or Churchill Meadows can learn to be doctors in Mississauga, can do their internship and their residency in Mississauga. The odds are overwhelming that these very students will replace the retiring baby boom physicians in the years to come and will settle in Mississauga.

We're not building the medical school, not paying the training of those students, and not providing them the hands-on internship and residency with a tax cut. We're investing in them. We're investing in our best people. We're investing in the facilities and the institutions that our people, our companies and our province need in the long term.

We need to open another facility in western Mississauga; we need to open an ambulatory surgery centre. Our physicians at Credit Valley gave up their change room years ago to build yet another operating room in the old facility, the existing facility, and for years our doctors, before surgery, had to go down the hall to wash their hands to get ready. Now we've raised the funding for Credit Valley and Credit Valley has fixed that. But about 75% to 80% of the surgery that our physicians perform at Credit Valley Hospital doesn't need to be done in a hospital. It doesn't need to be done in such a facility because most people don't need the pre-op or the post-op care. They don't need access to the intensive care unit. They don't need to stay overnight at a hospital. In most cases, three out of four or four out of five people walk in, have their surgery and walk out. Your typical procedure takes between 15 and 20 minutes.

We can free up our hospital operating rooms for complex emergency or serious surgery that does need pre-op or post-op care and does need access to the intensive care unit if we take the between 75% and 80% of our procedures and do them in a dedicated ambulatory surgery centre near Credit Valley. We can reduce wait times. We can help the doctors be more flexible in how they use their blocks of operating room time. We can do more procedures. But we can't build an ambulatory surgery centre with a tax cut. We can build it with an investment in our community. We can build a facility that is going to take our doctors and allow them to set up their offices and find something that you can't find in Mississauga, which is 1,000 square feet of office space. We can build a facility that's going to enable a doctor to be located near the facility that he or she uses to perform

procedures on behalf of patients. That type of facility is what our people want, that is what our people need, and that is what our government has been building for the future.

Just recently, last year, in response to an initiative that we began after we were first elected in 2003, we said at that time that we could move people better in western Mississauga if we added another GO train station. On September 4, 2007, the Lisgar GO train station opened and began to accept passengers and to take them downtown; 900 cars can park at Lisgar and not be on the roads to and from downtown. I must say, having worked very closely with GO Transit and with our community on that project, I still get a thrill when I take the train home, and as I pass Meadowvale and I'm getting ready to get off the train at my stop, the engineer says, "Lisgar. Next stop, Lisgar." To all the folks at Lisgar, we did it. We worked together. It's a real achievement for our community, and it is for me emblematic of the values that my colleagues in this government stand for and why we are so proud of the throne speech that our government has laid out. That's why I urge all of our members to support this throne speech and enable this government to get on with building the future for Ontario and all Ontarians.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm privileged to have this opportunity to say a few words on the throne speech that was recently delivered to start this session and what our government plans to do in its next four years.

It's from this very building and from this very chamber that decisions are made and legislation is passed that affects all Ontarians.

One need only look at the past and some of the decisions made in the past. There was the Hogs Hollow disaster that occurred years ago which resulted in the deaths of many young men who were working underground, where unfortunately a fire broke out. There were no rules in place at the time regarding how employees should be treated. As a result of that tragedy, this very place here, this Legislature, enacted the Employment Standards Act, which put into place rules regarding how employees should be treated and what kinds of safety standards should be in place for them. That legislation continues to exist to this very day.

Other legislation has also come into place over the years from this building. There's been all sorts of human rights legislation. We brought in the human rights act itself and amended it several times to protect those who needed protection, so there was less discrimination based on people's background, ethnicity, whether male or female, and some other grounds, and we continue to do things like that.

So, again, from this Legislature we bring forward a picture, as stated in the speech itself, which is the very essence of the throne speech, a picture of what we plan to do.

Over the years, we have focused on education and health care as being two of the cornerstones of our policies here since taking office in 2003, and we continue

to say in our throne speech that we'll build more on those two cornerstones of education and health care, and also on the cornerstone of the environment—you cannot have a good Ontario without having a clean Ontario—and on the area of energy, so important nowadays in so many ways.

We've made decisions regarding the ever-increasing demand for energy and how we plan to provide energy to people in this province as the demand goes up every summer of every year. As more people continue to use air-conditioning and other electronic devices and place more of a toll on the energy sector here in this province, we are trying to address that in the best possible way.

We also do that in other areas. We've laid that out clearly in our agenda for the next four years.

In the past four years, we've seen results as we continue to build upon what we started in 2003. In health care, we've seen results in all parts of Ontario. I can say that in my own riding of Scarborough Southwest we have the third-largest health care facility, Providence Healthcare, which was begun years ago by the Sisters of St. Joseph as a health care centre to help some of the seniors and some of the elderly who were unable to get help through hospitals or other facilities. Now it's become a massive complex that contains a hospital, a seniors' residence, as well as a nursing home, all in one. In the first four years of our mandate, the government was able to build on that, as it's helped so many other facilities and hospitals and health care centres throughout all of Ontario.

We've done the same with our education facilities. We've seen the improvements, starting in the early stages by capping class sizes in the early years and trying to build it into other years so that children are able to get a proper education, proper time with their teacher or their educator to get the best possible education.

We are doing this for a reason: because we want to have the healthiest possible people in Ontario and the most educated people in Ontario. We want to make sure that the 12 million or so people in our province are the best that they can possibly be.

We don't have large reserves of oil under the ground that we can tap and use and sell, as they are doing elsewhere. We don't have large amounts of gold or other precious metals under the ground which we can pull out and sell and make money from. We have as our best resource our people, the actual human beings who are living here, who come here from all parts of the world and, as many speakers have spoken about earlier, have made Ontario their home, whether they be the immigrants who arrived 100 years ago from parts of Europe or the ones who are arriving today from Asia, places like Bangladesh. My own riding has the second-largest Bangladeshi community in all of Ontario. In the last election I had the opportunity to meet hundreds of Bangladeshis who are integrating and are happy to be in the province of Ontario.

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We are trying our best to get these people, and all people who are in this province, to work and to do their

best here and get opportunities in Ontario; not to give them fish or food but to teach them how to fish or how to have food, or how to have a proper skill based on being properly educated to do that. That's what we're doing. We're not giving handouts; we're trying to teach them so that they can hand out to their families what is best for their families and what is best for them. So we're working hard.

I'm a product of an immigrant family. My family came here and had an opportunity, was given that opportunity. My father and mother are now retired. Both of them worked hard, raising a family and trying to get their children an education, trying to get their children careers and jobs, while at the same time providing food and necessities for them at home.

We do that here. It starts here in this very building, by providing necessities like proper hospitals and proper education facilities so that new immigrants that arrive, as well as those who have been here for a couple of centuries—100 years or 150 years; some of you have been here a long time—and their children have an opportunity. Ontario ranks very highly in a lot of these areas. That's why Toyota came here a few years ago and why other industries continue to come here.

We can't control the economy. We don't hide or run away from that. The fact is, yes, south of the border there are changes happening that are affecting us, but we are staying the course. It's clear, through what the Premier has said and what the government has said here, that we'll continue to stay the course and continue to focus on education and health care, and not pack that up and suddenly focus on something else, and not change things around and start focusing on changing our tax system and making changes just because perhaps other provinces are doing it. We are going to stay the course and we're going to get through the economic changes. I truly believe that we're doing the right thing and I applaud the government for continuing to stay the course and do the right thing.

There's a famous song—perhaps not that famous—that was written years ago by John Lennon. The title of the song is, "Nobody Told Me" there'd be days like these. It's probably the last song he wrote. It's true in so many ways. When I think about the lyrics of that song—he basically says, as the title says, "Nobody Told Me" there'd be days like these. No one told us there would be a recession—not even a recession; a period of slower growth or less-than-expected growth—occurring in early 2008. But that could turn around, and by June or July we could see a period of great growth.

Do we then change our policies again? I don't think so. I think the throne speech lays out clearly what we plan to do in the next four years. We stay that course and we do what we're supposed to do: We bring out legislation that best helps those who can help themselves. We are clear in that position. We made it clear in 2003 and we've stayed in that position here, five years later, in 2008. I'm happy to be part of that.

In the days to come and in the years to come, we will show that this course—this throne speech and the

legislation that we've put forward and will continue to put forward—is the right path to go. I think we will continue to build and grow on the cornerstones that we set out in 2003 and continue to see that education, health care, a clean environment and focusing on energy and delivering those services to the people of Ontario is the best way to make Ontario prosperous, to have it grow and to make the people of Ontario have the best possible opportunities for all. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to add some comments to the speech of the member for Mississauga—Streetsville and the member for Scarborough Southwest.

The member for Mississauga was talking about the new programs they have to create more doctors, particularly in the Mississauga area. That's a good thing. The past government of Ernie Eves created the northern Ontario medical school, with campuses in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, and that is certainly necessary in rural and northern Ontario. But what I would point out is that at this point we still have large areas of Ontario where we have shortages of doctors, and not just doctors; we have shortages of nurses, physiotherapists and other health professionals. In fact, last week I was at Lakeland Long Term Care in Parry Sound for a meeting to receive hundreds of cards, which I delivered today to the health minister, trying to get this government to keep their promise of funding for long-term-care homes. There, they pointed out that they received \$10,000 to advertise to hire a registered nurse. They put out full-page ads and radio ads and got two applications and one interview, and the person didn't show up for the interview. So there's obviously a real shortage out there of health professionals despite the fact that this McGuinty government has been in power some five years now.

But I come back to the point, where does this member think the money for long-term care in the health care system comes from? It comes from taxing individuals and private businesses. The dissenting report put out by the members of the PC Party, Once the Economic Engine of Canada, Now the Caboose: I would highly recommend he read it because it points out that Ontario has the highest marginal tax rate in Canada.

There are lots of other good statistics that I don't have time to go through in the last 13 seconds I have here.

Ontario: 37% marginal tax rate compared to 6.6% for New Brunswick or 11% for Newfoundland. That's scaring away business from this province.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We're going to wrap up pretty soon here. I understand that the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook will be speaking to the throne speech in about five minutes' time. That's Tim Hudak, of course, and he's the finance critic for his party. He's on the front benches. He's now a veteran of this Legislature.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess I am.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Well, he is. He has demonstrated himself to be a tough, effective examiner during the

course of question period and he has displayed outstanding leadership skills. During the course of his five years I've watched him mature from a young neophyte member to an experienced member of this assembly and a leading member of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario. So I'm looking forward to his comments on the throne speech because I suspect—look, I inevitably will not agree with a great deal of what he has to say. You'll understand it reflects the conservative values of a whole number of Ontarians who elect conservative members. These people, of course, have a right to be represented as well. I just tell folks that in but a few minutes' time Tim Hudak, the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, will be on his feet in this chamber.

I want to thank my colleague Michael Prue, the member for Beaches—East York, for doing his House duty here this afternoon. He isn't going to get a chance to speak to the throne speech this afternoon but he has been diligent, as usual, in terms of being here and sitting in the NDP benches. He is, in his own right, a leader amongst New Democrats here in Toronto and across this province.

Mr. Dave Levac: Let me start by picking up on the member from Welland. I do look forward to hearing the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, but I'll probably be able to give his speech in 10 seconds: "I agree with Jim Flaherty." That's all he's going to say. He's going to attack, and that's what the opposition is supposed to do. The NDP are supposed to do that too. So we've got a spectrum of people who are going to stand up and say things like, "You need to tax less. Cut all the taxes." Well, do you know what? We did that experiment, and for eight years, what do we get? A \$5.6-billion deficit. We've got all kinds of services removed.

What we talk about in the throne speech, and what the two honourable members from Mississauga—Streetsville and Scarborough Southwest just talked about: We see the glass as half full, not half empty. As a matter of fact, if we keep going the way we're going, we're going to have a glass that's three-quarters full, and we still have more work to do. That's exactly what we're trying to set the table to do.

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But listen carefully to what's going to happen. They're going to stand up and they're going to talk about what's wrong with Ontario. Jim Flaherty is wrong. He's telling people not to come to my riding and set up business. He's telling people from those two members' places, "Don't come up and set up business. We don't like what you're doing. Oh, Ontario, you must heel. You must do what we say to do."

What we're going to have to end up being is—the person who's going to stand up next is going to say all that Jim Flaherty is saying. So I'm asking you to set the table clearly. Listen carefully to what he is going to talk about. He's going to talk about the ideals that put us into an eight-year spiral down, in terms of hospital closures and nurses being fired. We want to revisit that again? Heavens, no. The NDP are going to stand up and say we're not spending money fast enough. We're not taxing fast enough.

So guess what we've done? The two members have made it quite clear what's happening in their riding. They're talking about a balance. That's what people are looking for: the intelligent balance between what taxes can do and generate for us and the services we are going to offer. Thank you to the members next door.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I recognize the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It was a very entertaining round of comments. To my good friend and colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, I point out that for the past four years, Ontario has certified—not trained, but certified—more foreign-trained doctors than domestically trained ones. He talks about other provinces having tax rates that are in fact lower than Ontario's, and that's true. But the fact of the matter is that many of those provinces are cutting their taxes with Ontario's money, with our equalization payments. Those equalization payments for Ontario are growing faster than our economy is. This is a challenge for Ontario. We remain proud Canadians. We remain proud to build this country, but we do suggest that because another province has been able to lower its tax rates with Ontario's money, we are comparing apples and oranges.

To my colleague from Welland who talks about his feelings for his colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook, I concur with him. Our feelings for one another as members, regardless of which side of the aisle that we sit on, are quite independent of our duties within our parties, whether it be in government or in opposition. The people who are here are all committed Ontarians. All have a vision of Ontario as a better place. I respect them and respect the motto of the Ontario Legislative Assembly, which, translated from Latin into English, means "Listen to the other side."

Finally, to my colleague from Brant, he points out very accurately that the ghost of the former member for Whitby–Ajax is with us still. One can only speculate whether or not the former member wants to return and why, but as the member pointed out, we've seen that play. We've been down that road, we know how it turns out, and we're glad we're not there now.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I am pleased to rise and offer comment on the throne speech. I thank my colleagues from Welland, Brantford and Mississauga in advance, for advance questions and comments before I even had a chance to speak, which is nice. You don't see that very often. It usually happens after the remarks, not beforehand, but I'll try not to disappoint, particularly the member for Brantford, who has already done his review of my speech before I even began.

This is supposed to be about the throne speech and a view from Niagara West–Glanbrook. You may recall that the throne speech took place in early December 2007. You might think it odd, as you're watching at home, why today in mid-March, March 18, we're still thinking about

the throne speech. Well, the reality is that this Legislature sat for a grand total of 10 days, a grand total of 10 days since the election of October 10, 2007.

In fact, the Legislature, I think, last actually sat in June 2007. It was recessed. The election campaign happened; the election was October 10. Then, with great alacrity, with amazing speed and determination, Dalton McGuinty made a decision not to call the Legislature into session for a couple months after the election because he was so full of vinegar to get to work with his exciting agenda from the last campaign. So we'll recall we sat for a grand total of 10 days, and that's why I'm speaking on the throne speech now on March 18, 2008.

I want to say too, and my colleague from Brantford will recall, I don't think there is a single government bill that was actually debated and passed in the last legislative session, which I found to be rather disappointing as well. You would think that in the session immediately after the election campaign the government would begin to implement some kind of agenda, some sort of vision for the province—by way of example, to take on one of the biggest issues of the day: the flight of 180,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs from the province of Ontario. But no, no such bill was brought forward; no such program was brought through the Ontario Legislature.

In fact, I think the only bill we really debated, although not passed, was one to ban certain kinds of snack foods in cafeterias, if you'll recall. I know my colleague the former principal, and in many ways still principal, from Brant applauds the legislation. I would say, though, that there may be some general support in the chamber for getting rid of Hostess Twinkies from cafeterias or chips and what have you. I just cannot believe that that is the most compelling, clear and present issue, even in education today. I'll give you some examples.

We have had, sadly, many cases of extreme violence happening in our schools in Ontario. The media were seized not too long ago by the Falconer report about what had happened in the Toronto school board. I'll read you a quote from an article of September 3, 2007: "One week before Jordan Manners was killed at C.W. Jefferys, a student at an east-end Toronto high school was severely beaten by as many as 50 students as 200 others watched." The article goes on to say, "Almost all the city's high schools have had their share of assaults on teachers or students, not to mention bullying and intimidation."

Obviously it's a major issue here in the city of Toronto and a major issue in other parts of Ontario. But instead of acting on this significant issue of concern to students, teachers and parents, we decided to concentrate on banning certain types of snack foods from the cafeterias. I think it's showing the vacuousness of the government's legislative agenda, or lack thereof, in the last session.

This session, as we come back after a long recess that did not see us sit through the end of December, January and February, the government similarly has prioritized banning smoking in automobiles. I don't know many people who actually do still smoke in automobiles with

children in them. But this is what the government has highlighted as one of their main priorities for the upcoming session, never mind the fact that 70,000 talented Ontario workers have gone to other provinces—and not just Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia, but even out east—to make their living and raise their families. Never mind that fact; never mind the fact that the total combined manufacturing job losses in all the other provinces combined are less than the manufacturing job losses in Ontario. One of the government's priorities, instead of addressing that crisis in our economy, is to bring forward a piece of legislation to ban smoking in cars, which I think is probably only done by a very small part of the population. I'm not sure a piece of legislation is going to stop it anyway. I wanted to point out that not a single government bill has passed, and their focus has been on banning junk food and smoking in automobiles, to see if the legislation actually has some enforcement mechanisms in it. We have not actually seen that yet. I don't think it's been introduced into the Ontario Legislature.

I would suggest that, in response to the speech from the throne in that initiative, if Dalton McGuinty truly wanted to do something about reducing smoking, he would take some strong initiatives to fight illegal cigarettes in the province of Ontario. It has gone from urban legend to common commentary of individuals selling cigarettes out of the trunks of their cars near local high schools. I think a significant portion of smokers in my riding of Niagara West—Glanbrook drive to the Six Nations reserve to purchase tobacco, which I don't believe is supposed to be happening, to take it out of the reserve to the non-native population.

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A study by the Ontario Tobacco Research Unit found that 37% of Ontario smokers avoided paying tobacco taxes by purchasing illegal cigarettes. The Ontario Convenience Stores Association estimates that the province is losing almost \$600 million per year from lost tobacco and sales taxes. So a major exodus of funding that could come in to support valuable programs like health care and education is going into the black market, fuelling organized crime. I've not seen a single initiative from the McGuinty government to butt out illegal cigarettes. In fact, it seems like they are afraid to take this issue on.

If they truly want to do something about combating smoking—as opposed to the initiative they're taking, which grabs some headlines but ultimately I don't think will make that much of a difference, because I don't think people smoke that much in their cars with kids anyway; if they do, they shouldn't—a real way to take a bite out of illegal cigarettes is enforcement mechanisms in some of those areas that I mentioned. There's no doubt that the illegal cigarettes, because they are so cheaply priced, are encouraging more smoking and encouraging more young people to take up the cigarette habit. So maybe we'll see some action on that. Maybe now that we've met for the 12th day since the October 10 election, we'll see some initiatives from the government to truly fight smoking through cutting off the black market.

You may recall as well that we were scheduled to come back into session on February 25. As I said, the House recessed back in December and we sat for a total of 10 days, and then the McGuinty government announced, "Well, we're not going to sit for a while yet." I guess they didn't have any legislation prepared to implement whatever agenda was supposed to be contained in the throne speech, so the recess was pushed back until yesterday. By the way, happy St. Patrick's Day to you, Mr. Speaker, one day late.

You would have thought that we would have taken some time since December to address some of these pressing issues. As I said, Ontario is last or second-to-dead-last in growth and job creation in all of Canada. We've seen developments since the throne speech where greenbelt farmers with thousands of acres of grape and tender fruit land now no longer have a market to sell in because of closure of processors. As my colleague from Welland had mentioned, CanGro, an operator in Niagara which was the only processing-canning factory this side of the Rockies in Canada, has sadly announced that they're closing their doors, throwing hundreds out of work and having significant detrimental impacts on growers in our area who depended on that canning factory for their peaches and pears.

Dalton McGuinty likes to boast about the greenbelt, but basically all we've seen him do is draw a series of lines on the map and then simply walk away from any obligation, which I believe he has, because of his legislation to support the farmers who actually try to make a living in the greenbelt. The Minister of Agriculture hopefully will be paying very close attention and will be acting to support our tender fruit Growers who no longer have a market.

I had hoped to see—maybe we still will see, now that we're in the second day of this new session—some activity by the government in this respect. But since the sad news was announced months ago, we have not had much of a reaction from the Dalton McGuinty government.

There was a piece of legislation introduced today by the finance minister. He did a press conference, you may recall, last week, where he announced that additional surpluses beyond a certain level would go to municipalities for infrastructure needs. I suspect one of the reasons why he did that press conference was because there will be very little for municipalities in the upcoming budget. That's probably why he did that announcement beforehand. There was no legislation given out at the press conference, by the way, just the minister's example of the \$800-million figure. Well, we saw today, as my colleague from Beaches—East York, the critic, noted quite well in his comments, where the bill substance didn't actually meet at all with what the minister said was going to be an initiative, and I thank my colleague for giving me some notes. This is the compendium of the so-called Investing in Ontario Act, 2008.

We expected a bill that would say that, if there were some surpluses beyond a certain level, they would go to

municipal infrastructure. Here's what the bill actually says: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council"—as we know, cabinet—"would be authorized to prescribe by regulation the recipients to whom payments may be made, the purposes for which payments may be made, the method of and basis for calculating the payments, the activities in which the Minister of Finance may engage in furtherance of the purposes of this act...." When you actually go inside the bill, they define a recipient as any group that is a not-for-profit that is eligible for funding under this act. The bill doesn't say anywhere in it, "municipalities."

By way of example—not to bring up a sore issue with my colleagues across the floor—the much-vaunted Ontario cricket association, the world's most famous cricket association, the recipient of a \$1-million grant under their last end-of-year Liberal slush fund, would be eligible for funding under this program.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I don't know if my colleague from Essex realizes this, but the bill the minister introduced today would enable the Ontario cricket association to receive yet another slush fund grant.

Interjection: Good.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I hear my colleague across the way saying, "Good." I think that the taxpayers would strongly disagree with the notion that slush funds should be used to finance groups like the cricket association because of Liberal connections, as opposed to being based on merit.

The finance minister said one thing at his press conference and we found it was entirely different when he came here before the Legislature. As my colleague from Beaches–East York has also pointed out, the compendium notes that, "Should the surplus exceed an amount set in the regulations, then the regulations would identify municipalities as recipients for 2007-08 and provide for payments to municipalities for capital investments." Again, that's not in the bill; that's the intention of the minister. But notice that they specifically say, "for the 2007-08 fiscal year," meaning that all bets are off for any future fiscal years. It could be to finance cricket associations and the like, of which we saw in the spring of last year, that caused, finally, a cabinet minister to lose his position.

I do want to note that while some municipal leaders may have had their hopes up—and you know why they had their hopes up? Because this government has shown no commitment to a transparent process for funding municipal capital infrastructure. It seems to be that grants are steeped in a lot of political decisions. The announcement may have sounded good to some municipalities, but now when they actually see the bill, they'll see that any group or partnership of individuals could qualify for that funding. Mind you, let's be clear: That's not debated here in the Ontario Legislature; there's no bill to do so. It is cabinet, behind closed doors, that would make all of these decisions sometime in the summer. I'm sure, just coincidentally, those decisions will be

made in the summer of 2011, just before the next election, to dole out more of the political slush funds.

The other thing I should point out is that if this is the funding mechanism that the McGuinty government views as appropriate for municipal capital investment, it is very lacking. Basically it means that after the end-of-year spending sprees take place, which I think were about \$3.6 billion in the last two fiscal years—after they do all the shovelling of the dough out the door to beat the March 31 deadline to spend that money, only after those slush funds do the municipalities get any kind of consideration—that is, if the finance minister is good for the words he said in his press conference. It certainly is not a predictable, not a transparent and not a fair funding mechanism for capital projects for municipalities.

A much better way, as my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has suggested, is the gas tax funding, which would be predictable to municipalities, which all would benefit from, not simply those with transit but those like Pelham, Grimsby and Lincoln in my riding of Niagara West–Glanbrook, which also would like to use those funds to invest in roads and bridges.

Let me also point out, while I'm on the topic of Pelham—and my colleague beside me, Mr. Kormos, worked very hard to advance the issues of Pelham over the last number of years and was rewarded for it by a strong show of support from Pelham voters in the previous election. Now Pelham is in my riding. I've enjoyed working with him on a number of issues, including getting that berm stopped and now removed in Fenwick. It took both of us and some local residents to bring some of that berm juice here to the door of the Premier's office.

Mr. Peter Kormos: We moved a berm and a minister.

Mr. Tim Hudak: A berm and a minister were both moved, the member points out.

Speaking about funding for municipalities, Pelham found out through the press yesterday that they would no longer be receiving any Ontario municipal partnership fund monies. The government had said that they'd be providing stable funding to municipalities. That certainly is not the case with Pelham. Granted, Pelham's grant was sharply reduced. They used to receive the CRF, the community reinvestment fund, under the PC government. They scrapped that to bring in their own OMPF, the Ontario municipal partnership fund. That slashed the amount of money that Pelham, Lincoln and Grimsby received. Pelham was reduced to only \$26,000, but at least they had some funding coming from the province. They found out by way of press release that that funding now has been eliminated altogether. No word from the minister's office; no explanation; simply, when the grants went off, they were off the list.

I'll say to my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Finance that I hope they will clear that up immediately. If the government is promising—I know that suggesting that the McGuinty government follow through on promises may be a bit of a stretch. I want to give them the benefit of the doubt, and I

would strongly suggest that, at the very least, they restore Pelham's funding dollar for dollar. I think it should be higher. I think Pelham's rurality should be recognized by this funding formula; it currently fails to do so. At the very least, make sure they get the same amount of money they received in previous fiscal years.

We did our best, I think, as colleagues here in the opposition, to try to hold the government to account in the last session, as short as it was. We are now back in session, hopefully for a bit longer than the much-abbreviated first session of the Legislature of Dalton McGuinty's second mandate.

I, as the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, will bring issues forward, as I have on fighting the gypsy moth infestation and trying to get a health card clinic into the Mount Hope area. We brought forward some issues, with some success, about getting drivers' licences offices restored in Smithville and Grimsby; I'm pleased that has moved ahead.

Certainly, those communities impacted by the greenbelt legislation and then Dalton McGuinty's walking away from his responsibilities—much like an absentee landlord. Dalton McGuinty, when it comes to the greenbelt, is an absentee landlord. He drew the lines on a map and then walked away from any obligation. When

you see CanGro close its doors; when you see Cadbury Schweppes, which had produced grape juice, close their doors; when you see a sweet cherry processing line in Vineland shut down and no longer use local cherries—sadly, that has left several thousand acres of tender fruit land without a market to go to. The federal government, to their credit, recently came through. Credit goes to Dean Allison and Rick Dykstra and Rob Nicholson for working on this—about \$26 million to assist in a transition program. Sadly, the province of Ontario is not matching that funding. Other provinces have matched that funding and brought forward their 40% share.

Mr. Robert Bailey: AWOL.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario is AWOL, as my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton says—an absent-without-leave landlord.

I do hope that in the session ahead of us we will see some action on these files, as well as the finance issues we discussed earlier today, to make our province again attractive for jobs and investment.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 19 March 2008

Mercredi 19 mars 2008

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Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 19 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 19 mars 2008

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEONATAL CARE

Mr. Frank Klees: Today is Prematurity Awareness Day. It is dedicated to the children who are born pre-term, or prior to 37 weeks of pregnancy, and their families. Thousands of pre-term babies each year are admitted to neonatal intensive care units across Ontario and are entrusted to the expert care of neonatologists, who ensure they receive the highest level of care possible.

Joining us in the House today are Lauren and Sam Pezzullo, of Newmarket. On July 5, 2003, Lauren gave birth to her premature baby son, Linden, weighing 3.3 pounds. Lauren and her husband, Sam, stood vigil as Linden went from one medical crisis to another, including 16 lumbar punctures, three blood transfusions, respiratory distress syndrome and a brain bleed. Lauren and Sam were asked several times if they wanted Linden's life support turned off, but they would not give up their vigil.

Today, their son, Linden, is a happy and healthy five-year-old. To help other parents with premature babies, Lauren and Sam established the Linden Fund, a charity that raises money to buy equipment for neonatal intensive care units across Canada. A number of volunteers of the Linden Fund are with us today as well.

On behalf of all members of this Legislature and all Ontarians, I express our gratitude to Lauren and Sam Pezzullo and the many volunteers who make the work of the Linden Fund possible. I ask all members to welcome them and encourage them in their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB

Mr. Jim Brownell: As a former educator, a father and grandfather, and as representative of the good people of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, I believe that there is no more important function that we play in society than the provision of security and opportunity to our youth. In fact, the way a society treats its youth says a great deal about how it operates as a whole.

This is certainly the case in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, where the Cornwall Youth Centre celebrated its 10th anniversary of excellent service to the youth of my riding. To meet the growing needs in our community, the centre has recently transitioned to the Boys and Girls Club of Cornwall/Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

The mission of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada is to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships and develop confidence and skills for life. This has long been the goal of the former Cornwall Youth Centre's board of directors. President Lucien Lalonde and the entire board are to be commended for their unparalleled work over the years. In particular, I would also like to commend board member and Cornwall Chief of Police Dan Parkinson, who has worked tirelessly to create a positive relationship between local youth and police services. Our youth are our future, and in Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, the future continues to grow as our entire community works to provide a safe environment for our children and opportunities for them to learn and mature. I commend the new Boys and Girls Club of Cornwall/SDG.

GASOLINE TAX

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yesterday, I reintroduced my private member's bill, Bill 38. This bill, if passed, would compel the province to share its gas tax revenue with all municipalities. That is what the federal government does now, because it recognizes what we in rural Ontario have always held: that our roads and bridges are our public transportation system.

The McGuinty Liberals continue to insist that rural Ontario municipalities don't deserve their fair share of the gas tax collected from them. In fact, there's no question that rural citizens pay a far larger per capita share of the gas tax, because without public transportation a vehicle is a must. For the most part, families with two working parents require two vehicles just to get back and forth from work. It is patently unfair for this government to continue to penalize the hard-working people of my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, as well as all rural people, with their approach to sharing revenue.

This initiative has received broad support from municipalities across the province. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus has identified it as one of their top

priorities. If the Premier is determined to be unfair to municipalities, just because the federal Conservatives are treating them fairly, then I say: Stop playing your childish games. Stop inhaling the fumes of Toronto traffic for a while and come up and visit us in good old Renfrew county. Perhaps the fresh air will clear your head.

EVENTS IN TIBET

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise in the House today on behalf of the over 3,000 Tibetan Canadians who live in Parkdale-High Park. As members have witnessed on international news, over 100 Tibetans have been killed in their homeland simply for demanding democracy and some degree of autonomy. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has called for an opportunity to have a dialogue with the Chinese government, and even that modest request has been denied.

Along with Tibetan Canadians, we call for an immediate withdrawal of all armed forces and martial law from Tibet; we call for the removal of restrictions on movement and communication; we call for the release of political prisoners arrested during the demonstration; and we call for unimpeded access to Tibet for foreign journalists and United Nations representatives.

My resolution, already tabled, is a sister resolution to one tabled in Ottawa urging the Chinese government to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. As the founding member of a non-partisan Ontario Friends of Tibet, set up with other members of this Legislature, I add my voice to the thousands of Tibetans who pray for a free Tibet.

SIBLEY SKI TOUR

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm very pleased to inform the House that earlier this month Thunder Bay's legendary Sleeping Giant Provincial Park hosted the 31st annual Sibley Ski Tour, and it was a resounding success. As you may be aware, the Sibley Ski Tour is the largest cross-country skiing event in the Thunder Bay region and this year drew over 800 registered participants. It also attracts visitors from all over the region and provides many economic benefits to our local communities.

The Sibley Ski Tour is open to everyone. Young and old, beginners and advanced, skiers come together for an exciting day of fun and recreation. This year, three groomed distances were offered for both classic and skate techniques: the 10-kilometre family event, the 20-kilometre tour, and the 50-kilometre—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Mr. Bob Delaney: He didn't have his 90 seconds.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Somebody's got to start the clock. Now I've got a minute, 35 seconds left.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): My apologies. I had just glanced at the clock and I saw the zeros. Please continue and complete your statement.

Mr. Bill Mauro: No problem. I'd like to take a moment to recognize this year's winners. Stephen Hart and Brook Latimer won their respective men's and women's 50-kilometre races. Luke Viljakainen and Lisa Patterson won their respective 20-kilometre races, and David Ek and Manon Magnan won their respective 10-kilometre races.

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Hundreds of volunteers come together every year to make Sibley a success. I wish to specifically acknowledge Sibley's key organizer, Diane Ambro. This was Diane's 17th and final tour, and I think she deserves special recognition for her hard work, for making the ski tour one of Thunder Bay's premier sporting events. Taking over for Diane next year is Peter Gallagher. I am confident, knowing Peter, that he will do a great job.

I am proud that we in Thunder Bay host such a fantastic event. I'd like to encourage all my honourable colleagues, and Ontarians, to visit Sleeping Giant Provincial Park to see its spectacular scenery and to ski the best trails in the northwest.

EVENTS IN TIBET

Mr. Randy Hillier: I always stand for freedom, justice and democracy. In the past, I have spoken for those who cannot be heard. I rise today, a voice for those silenced half a world away.

The people of Tibet do not enjoy our freedoms. Freedoms we take for granted are met with violence and the wrath of the Communist Chinese government. Over 50 years ago, China used deadly force invading Tibet. They use deadly force today to maintain their rule.

The history of the Moscow Olympics comes to mind. Then, as now, a cruel government masquerades behind the games for legitimacy. It is inconsistent to participate in an activity of civility and sportsmanship while China openly oppresses the people of Tibet. The Moscow boycott lessened Soviet prestige and muted Soviet propaganda.

As free people, we must encourage the free world to act. Canada must freeze aid, suspend student exchange programs and expedite refugee claims—and boycott the China Olympics unless the Chinese army withdraws from Tibet immediately.

I ask all free Canadians to join with me and lend your voice to those in Tibet.

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to share with my colleagues, and with all Ontarians, what the McGuinty government is doing to ensure a strong and sustainable future for rural Ontario. I wish to highlight one component of our rural plan in particular, and that is the rural economic development program, otherwise known as RED.

The RED program is an economic development initiative that helps communities remove barriers to

development and economic growth. Since October 2003, 145 projects have been approved, with a provincial investment of \$47 million, generating approximately \$479 million in new economic activity in rural Ontario.

I know that the Conservative Party believes it speaks for rural Ontario, but the fact of the matter is that the concept of a rural economic development program didn't even make the 2007 Conservative platform. The truth is that the McGuinty government has a proud record of investing in rural Ontario, and we have no signs of stopping. In fact, we plan to increase our annual investment in the RED program by 50%.

The RED program is just one of the many facets of this government's plan for rural Ontario. We understand what rural Ontario communities need, and we'll continue to work with them for a great future in rural Ontario.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm happy to stand in the House today to have the opportunity to speak about the good work our government is doing in terms of the Ontario municipal partnership fund. In my riding alone, we have received over \$16 million in much-needed funding: \$11.5 million for the city of Brantford and \$4.5 million for the county of Brant. This funding is extremely important to our local economy and to our citizens' quality of life. The grant will assist our municipality with their delivery of the social programs, support areas with limited property assessment, address challenges faced by rural communities and respond to the policing costs of those very rural communities.

Early this year, the province took full responsibility for Ontario drug benefit program costs, removing this burden from the municipal property tax base of the riding of Brant. As a result, Brant's municipal social program costs will go down. By 2011, our government will also take full responsibility for the riding's Ontario disability support program costs.

No municipality in the province of Ontario will receive less money than they have from last year. The minister ensures me that OMPF funding will not be reduced in 2008. As a government, we can't do anything better than that in terms of working partnerships with our municipalities. We are building a strong provincial-municipal relationship and showing that we are serious about the people of Ontario and, in particular, of my riding of Brant. To the minister and to the Premier, on behalf of the people in my riding, I wish to thank you for the full support you are providing for us in the riding of Brant.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to clear up some misunderstandings about our government's approach to the economy. Unlike the federal finance minister and other federal Tories, we want to invest in communities like Brantford, Oakville, Oshawa and Windsor-Essex. These communities are full of great people, and

they have great potential. The McGuinty government has not turned and will not turn its back on these communities.

There seems to be a misunderstanding on the part of Progressive Conservatives here as well. They call for tax cuts, but if we do that, just like they did over a decade ago, we would be closing hospitals just like they did over a decade ago, cutting social programs just like they did and sending our public education system back into turmoil just like they did. The havoc that the Conservatives wreaked on this province still reverberates. The McGuinty government has had to pick up the pieces that were left behind by the Conservatives, and now Ontario is moving forward.

The fact is, there are over 450,000 more net new jobs than in 2003, when we took over. In January of this year, Ontario outpaced other provinces in manufacturing sales growth. Combined with Quebec, we contributed 97% of the gain in manufacturing sales in January of this year. I hope this clears things up. This government is doing what is right for the economy, doing what is right for the people of Ontario.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent for us to wear the prematurity awareness ribbon provided to us by the members of the Linden Fund.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member seeks unanimous consent to wear the ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today, the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 19, 2008, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (CELLULAR PHONES), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (TÉLÉPHONES CELLULAIRES)

Mr. O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while a person is driving on a highway / Projet de loi 40, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour interdire l'utilisation de téléphones et d'autres équipements pendant qu'une personne conduit sur une voie publique.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John O'Toole: Today in the Legislature, I urge the Minister of Transportation to take this issue very seriously. The intent of the legislation is to make our highways and byways safer in the province of Ontario. Many governments around the world have already recognized the connection between improving highway safety and the responsible use of technology while driving. The government must recognize the broader issue of driver distraction, and that the use of technology while driving is essentially dangerous and has been proven around the world. I urge the Minister of Transportation to work co-operatively. I would be happy to give him full credit for doing the right thing.

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MADRESA ASHRAFUL ULOOM ACT, 2008

Mr. Qaadri moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Madresa Ashraf ul Uloom.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS), 2008 LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SYSTÈMES LIMITEURS DE VITESSE)

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in relation to the use of speed-limiting systems in commercial motor vehicles / Projet de loi 41, Loi modifiant le Code de la route relativement à l'utilisation de systèmes limiteurs de vitesse dans les véhicules utilitaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Transportation for a short statement?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'll await the statements by ministers.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I rise in the House today to talk about another step in Ontario's plans for a cleaner environment and safer roads. This government has heard the public's concerns about speeding trucks on Ontario highways that pollute our environment and create unnecessary risk. The reality is that over one third of Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions come from the transportation sector; 84% of this comes from road transportation.

Ontario has been studying a mandatory speed limiter program for commercial vehicles for the last 18 months. Our research shows significant environmental and safety benefits. Our government's legislation, if passed, would make speed limiters on large trucks mandatory. This built-in electronic device would cap the speed of trucks at 105 kilometres per hour. The vast majority of large trucks built within the last decade are already equipped with this technology. This legislation will require that these devices be activated on Ontario's roads.

Our proposal would help Ontario to achieve the goals set out in our Go Green action plan on climate change by decreasing fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Under this plan, we have set ambitious but achievable targets to reduce Ontario's greenhouse gas emissions by 6% below 1990 levels by the year 2014, 15% by the year 2020, and 80% below 1990 levels by the year 2050.

Speed limiters will deliver an estimated 1% to 3% of the greenhouse gas reductions needed to achieve Ontario's 2014 climate change targets. Speed limiters would join a number of important green initiatives already under way to help us meet these targets, including: the green commercial vehicle project, a four-year, \$15-million pilot project to help businesses switch to cleaner technologies such as hybrid power; Move Ontario 2020, a \$17.5-billion plan to build more than 900 kilometres of rapid transit in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton, the largest transit investment in Canadian history; and more recently, the Next Generation of Jobs Fund, a \$1.15-billion fund to support companies whose products reduce pollution and energy use.

A recent Transport Canada study found that capping the speed of all large trucks operating in Ontario at a maximum of 105 kilometres per hour would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by as much as 280,000 tonnes. This is like taking 2,700 tractor-trailers off the road each year. It would also save trucks, or truckers themselves, an estimated 100 million litres of diesel fuel each and every year.

Ontario is a leader in road safety, and we are always looking for ways to make our highways safer. Studies show that speed has a direct relationship with the severity of injuries in a vehicle crash. Reducing the speed of a

large truck will greatly reduce the impact in a collision. Research shows that excessive speed is a factor in nearly 23% of crashes involving large vehicles. We anticipate that speed limiters would address this situation.

I would like to acknowledge the stakeholders who have helped us to develop this legislation to improve the environment and keep our roads safe. We're joined in the House today by representatives from the Ontario Trucking Association, Pollution Probe, the Canadian Automobile Association, the Ontario Safety League, the Traffic Injury Research Foundation, the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario, the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Ontario Lung Association, SmartRisk, and the Ontario Provincial Police. I note, in diverting—I know we're not supposed to divert from the statements—that it's interesting that the Ontario Trucking Association, which is most affected by this, is here today in full support of it and has been for some time. The Ontario Trucking Association states that more than 50% of Ontario's trucks are already voluntarily using speed limiters. The majority of this industry realizes that the use of speed limiters would increase a truck's fuel economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower maintenance costs. Large trucks must operate at safe speeds so our friends and families may get home safely.

This legislation, if passed, will help to save lives. It will help us breathe cleaner air. We are serious about improving our environment, and we're committed to improving road safety. Let's tackle these issues together. Let's curb pollution by burning less fuel and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Let's reduce collision rates. Let's promote safe driving. Let's keep citizens safe on our roads. I ask all members to support this bill.

SHELTER ALLOWANCES ALLOCATIONS-LOGEMENT

Hon. Jim Watson: I rise today to inform members of an important housing program that is helping thousands of low-income working families across the province. The program is called ROOF, which stands for rental opportunity for Ontario families. It is a \$185-million program that helps low-income working families to pay their rent. These are working families who are not living in social housing, working families who are not receiving any social assistance, working families who are struggling to get by while spending more than 30% of their income on rent. In July 2007, the government launched the ROOF program to ease the struggle; it was launched by my colleague the now Minister of the Environment. Currently—

Applause.

Hon. Jim Watson: I thank him for applauding for himself.

Currently there are approximately 14,000 low-income working families, each receiving a housing allowance of \$100 per month. For these families, this money can mean

the difference in many day-to-day costs like purchasing healthy food or warm winter clothing for children. We know that more families need this assistance. That's why on February 22, I was very pleased to be in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean, particularly at the Michele Heights Community Centre, when we announced the second round of applications for this important housing allowance program.

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Pour ces familles, cet argent peut faire toute la différence quant à plusieurs de leurs dépenses quotidiennes, comme l'achat d'aliments sains ou de vêtements d'hiver pour leurs enfants. Nous savons qu'un plus grand nombre de familles a besoin de cette aide.

At the announcement, I had the privilege to meet with Russell Mawby, the city of Ottawa's director of housing, and Eileen Dooley of the United Way, who said, "We have a waiting list for affordable housing and we hope this announcement will reduce that list." They spoke about how programs like ROOF support their clients in their struggle, and how a single mother needs every bit of help to pay the rent and provide for her family.

Housing affordability is a complex issue and covers a broad spectrum of challenges. It's about homelessness. It's about finding safe, affordable housing in one's own community. It's about keeping up with rent payments and supporting a family. It's also about getting a foothold in a housing market that is becoming less and less affordable.

These challenges are varied and they require a variety of initiatives to address them. ROOF is the latest addition to the province's housing program, which includes the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program, the strong communities rent supplement program, the provincial rent bank, the delivering opportunities for Ontario renters initiative, and initiatives to benefit off-reserve aboriginal households.

I believe that ROOF will be a major help to low-income working families. Eligible families must have at least one child under the age of 18, have a net income below \$20,000 per year, as outlined in the program guidelines, and pay more than 30% of their income on rent. Families must not be receiving a rent subsidy or social assistance.

I would encourage families in Ontario to take advantage of the second chance to apply for the ROOF program before the June 30, 2008, deadline. ROOF is making a real difference in the lives of many working families in the province. Families can request applications online at ontario.ca/roof, or by calling the ministry's call centre using the toll-free number 1-888-544-5101.

I hope that all of my colleagues will encourage their constituents to apply for the program. I have sent material to all MPPs' offices and I hope you will distribute it to those individuals who qualify.

Safe, affordable shelter is a basic human need. It is crucial to our survival and our sense of self-worth. Our government believes housing is fundamental to the strength of Ontario.

J'espère que mes collègues encourageront leur commettants à présenter une demande dans le cadre du programme. Notre gouvernement estime que le logement est essentiel à la vitalité de l'Ontario.

I commit to you that our government will continue to do all it can through ROOF and other programs to help people obtain suitable affordable housing. That's why I was so pleased on Monday to be with the Premier and Minister Deb Matthews to announce \$100 million to repair affordable housing units throughout the province of Ontario.

MINING INDUSTRY

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I am very pleased to rise in the House today to inform members of the record-breaking levels of activity and investment that are being achieved in Ontario's mineral development industry.

I can report to the House that the mood of the industry is upbeat, as demonstrated by record attendance at the recent Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada annual convention in Toronto two weeks ago. At the same time, we've all heard a great deal these past few days and weeks about issues between aboriginal communities and mineral exploration companies. Our government is saddened by these developments. However, it does not lessen our resolve to work co-operatively with Ontario's aboriginal communities. There are many positive stories that I feel should be acknowledged and looked upon as examples of what can be when we all work together in a co-operative, respectful partnership.

From a mining perspective, the good news is that our most recent statistics show that Ontario is expected to once again lead the country in 2008, with \$629 million in exploration expenditures, up from \$502 million in 2007. We are hopeful that this kind of activity will lead to the development of new mines such as the De Beers Canada Victor mine, 90 kilometres west of Attawapiskat on the coast of James Bay, which I am pleased to say is completing its first production run as we speak. With a total investment approaching \$1 billion, De Beers expects the mine to produce six million carats of high-quality diamonds during its life. The Victor mine has employed about 600 people during construction and will employ another 375 during production. Estimates are that this project will create a \$6.7-billion ripple through the provincial economy; much of it, I'm pleased to say, in northern Ontario.

In preparation for the opening of our new mine, the government put in place a highly competitive royalty rate that has positioned Ontario's diamond industry to thrive now and into the future. I'm pleased to say that the hallmark of the Victor mine has been extensive and forthright consultations with local aboriginal partners. This has led to the signing of impact benefit agreements that cover a wide range of issues, including education and training, employment, workplace conditions, business opportunities, environmental protection, social and cultural protection, and significant financial consider-

ations. Our government believes this is only the beginning, and that the minerals sector can provide meaningful opportunities for economic development and job creation for many of the north's aboriginal communities.

We also believe that there is a positive way forward. That's why my ministry has been working, over the past several years, to continuously improve relationships and engagement processes with aboriginal peoples. As part of these efforts, and in keeping with our policy goals outlined in Ontario's first mineral development strategy, we initiated a comprehensive engagement process aimed at developing more effective aboriginal consultation approaches for minerals sector activities. Last year we released a discussion paper as one part of a multi-pronged engagement process that has included numerous meetings, workshops, pilot projects and information-sharing sessions across the north. To date, my ministry has received positive, detailed feedback and advice from many aboriginal communities.

We're also encouraged by the progress made thus far. We're encouraged by the memorandum of understanding that was signed earlier this month between the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations. We're encouraged by other local MOUs between exploration companies operating in northern Ontario and local First Nations, and by the impact benefit agreements signed with several First Nations and tribal councils for the Musselwhite gold mine near Red Lake.

At the recent northern boreal prospectors symposium, more than 100 participants from 30 First Nations and aboriginal organizations came to Sioux Lookout to hear from other First Nations members how northern communities and individuals can benefit from the minerals industry. For the first time, at the recent prospectors' convention in Toronto, an aboriginal organization from Ontario actively participated in seeking business-to-business relationships.

There is no question that serious challenges remain, but these communities and others like them have shown us that there is indeed a way forward. My ministry strongly believes this, and through our commitment to meeting our duty to consult, which we are implementing in the context of the Mining Act, we believe the way forward is communication, co-operation and engagement.

Today I will be joining industry partners for Meet the Miners Day at Queen's Park. We will be reminded that Ontario's mining industry produced an estimated \$10.7 billion worth of minerals in 2007, and that mining continues to be a pillar of our economy, sustaining some 100,000 direct and indirect jobs. Most importantly, we will be reminded of the opportunity mining offers to the people and communities of the north and, indeed, all of Ontario. I look forward to seeing my colleagues from all sides of the House at today's reception, to greet the members of the mining association. We welcome them all here today and look forward to seeing you later in the day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

SPEED-LIMITING SYSTEMS

Ms. Laurie Scott: I rise today in response to the Minister of Transportation's statement regarding speed limiters, and I want to start by thanking our transportation critic for the official opposition, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, for allowing me to respond to the minister.

I think it's important that we remind all members of the House—the ones who were here before and the new ones who just arrived—that back in May 2006, I introduced Bill 115, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, known as the speed limiter bill, to this Legislature. The Ontario Trucking Association, which is here today, has been advocating for this very concept and has been a leader on this front, and they've literally been waiting for the Liberals to get on board. So I want to thank them for all the support that we've received. This isn't a new parade, but once again, as we've so often seen before, the McGuinty parade crashers have jumped in front of the parade and pretended to take the lead.

1410

Prior to October's election, the Premier travelled all over the province making election announcements on the taxpayer's dime, including a bunch of last-minute environmental items. The minister has asked all members to support this bill, but I think it's also very important to remind everyone here that despite what members of the government are trying to convey now, the Minister of Health himself voted against the legislation when I introduced it.

Interjections: No.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. Not only did he vote against it, I recall him running rapidly from the back room to get into his seat to voice displeasure at the private member's bill, which is the same as the one introduced today. Not only that, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation at that time also voted against it. But I digress. The Minister of Health, who responds to the real and serious needs of long-term-care residents with the insulting suggestion that he wear a diaper—this is the Minister of Health.

I suppose safety and environmental concerns weren't getting the polling numbers needed in order to be a priority for the Liberals—or, worse yet, maybe they were too busy diving into that slush fund—but the bill was never brought before committee. We support the principles of this bill, and I say how truly disappointing it is that the Liberals, who clearly felt that road safety, reduced fuel consumption and reducing emissions weren't important, are now trying to take credit for a concept that wasn't important to them only a few months ago.

SHELTER ALLOWANCES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to register my concerns in the House that this Minister of Municipal Affairs is using this Legislature as a backdrop for a self-congratulatory reannouncement opportunity for something that has been

reannounced three times. There's nothing new in here. In fact, it was first announced by Minister Gerretsen. He said that he'd have 27,000 low-income families. Then it was announced by yourself, back in December, as 20,000 people. That's 7,000 people less. It seems like you're going in the wrong direction with this plan.

What the minister should be doing here is spending a bit more time keeping the costs of shelter down, not raising the costs, raising taxes and the cost of energy, all of the costs inherent with living in a shelter. You're raising the costs, not lowering them.

Minister, spend a bit more time working with those people that can't afford your high cost of doing business.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased the minister pumped up the "meet the miners" night, which I encourage all members to go to as well. But the minister's statement was a bit like the rooster taking credit for the sunrise. Certainly, Ontario has enormous mineral potential and talented entrepreneurs that are in the industry. But the McGuinty government ain't got much to do with the Victor mine or the other activity, because the minister well knows that his predecessors took Ontario from the number one jurisdiction for mineral investment in the world under the previous Mike Harris PC government out of the top 10 altogether, thanks to Dalton McGuinty's high taxes, high energy and runaway red tape.

I know the minister didn't write this line, but when he says, "In preparation for the opening of our new mine, the government put in place a highly competitive royalty rate"—George Orwell couldn't have come up with that one. I know Gravelle didn't write that, because what you did after the mine was under way was jack the tax rates up, to potentially three times the value—a move, by the way, that would make Hugo Chavez blush. It reverberated throughout the world, and I do hope that this minister, who I know quite well, will fight that and get mining taxes back down to the level that they should be.

SHELTER ALLOWANCES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm responding to the Minister of Housing's statement. This is how dire the housing situation is in this province: We have over 125,000 households waiting for affordable housing, over 70,000 in the GTA alone, and the average housing wait time is 10 to 12 years. We need ROOF, but we need roofs more, Minister.

I want to announce that I'm going to be tabling a bill next week calling for shelter to become an Ontario human right, because housing is a right. It is a right; it is not a privilege. I know that the McGuinty Liberals treat it as if it were a privilege, so we have one superficial announcement after another. We don't see the shovels in the ground, and that's what Ontarians need. And they need it now.

This is a government, after all, that promised at least 20,000 new builds when they were first elected, and they

have provided less than a third of that, by their very own reckoning, which I have to say is also somewhat suspect.

Again, I reiterate: Housing should be a right, according to the United Nations—that's why I am bringing in the bill—not a privilege. This government treats it as if it were a privilege.

So what do we need? We need roofs as well as ROOF. We need a shovel in the ground now—new units.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On behalf of the New Democratic caucus, I want to first of all welcome all those from the mining industry who are here today. We understand very well in our caucus the importance that the mining industry plays in Ontario and what it means for hard-working people who are employed in the industry—some of the best-paying jobs, some of the most technical jobs and some of the jobs that quite frankly sustain our communities, such as Sudbury, Red Lake, Timmins and others.

I want to say to those who might have forgotten, I come out of the mining industry. I worked underground for a number of years as an electrician and understand the industry well. I want to say to the minister across the way, what gall you have coming into this House today and crowing on your record of mining. On the De Beers project, you guys tripled the mining royalty. You come into the House and you say, "We have a competitive rate for royalties when it comes to diamond mining." De Beers went to the international board and said, "We are selling this project in Ontario as a stable place to grow, as a stable place to do business. We are saying that Ontario is not going to change the rules halfway through the process."

Do you know how surprised everybody was at the last budget? People basically fell off their seats because they couldn't believe this government, after they were involved, getting ready to spend a billion dollars to bring that mine on to production—that you would essentially triple the taxation rate on diamonds. I say that is not a progressive move. That is not a fair move. That is one that is quite regressive and one, quite frankly, that should be undone.

Then you come into the House, today of all days, a couple of days after we've basically jailed the leadership of the community of KI for trying to do what is right by their community and making sure that, yes, mining happens in that community but that the community is able to benefit. The provincial government's response is not to say, "Let's put in place protocols that basically deal with the need to consult between First Nations and the provincial government." The industry understands this. The industry understands that at the end of the day, if we are going to do business in mining in northern Ontario, we have to have the protocols in place to make sure that First Nations are benefactors of the project.

What have you done? You've taken the leadership and you've thrown them in jail. I say to this government,

"Shame on you," because that is not co-operation. That is how you basically entrench the First Nations community into a position that quite frankly none of us are going to benefit from, because you guys have set it up.

I say to this government across the way, if you want to talk about co-operation, resolve the issue. Tell your Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and tell your Premier to do what the mining industries and others have been calling for, and that is to put in place protocols when it comes to development and when it comes to exploration, and have revenue-sharing put in place so that when mining happens in communities, everybody can benefit.

The last point I want to make—I use De Beers as the example of how to do things right. Yes, De Beers did it right, but they didn't have the support of your government or other governments to the degree they needed in order to work their way through trying to negotiate a deal with the community of Attawapiskat and others. They've basically been on their own because this government has been missing in action when it comes to the leadership role that they have to play to assist industry to get those IBAs in place so that you can do the development. They're still negotiating some of those agreements with some of the communities, and this government has been missing in action. So don't come in here and try to pretend that you guys are progressive on this file, because you failed a long time ago.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg the indulgence of the members to introduce a number of guests today.

First I'd like to introduce the former member of the 35th and 36th Parliaments from the riding of Victoria-Haliburton, and from that riding of Haliburton-Victoria-Brock for the 37th Parliament, Chris Hodgson, in the west gallery. Welcome today.

1420

On behalf of the member from Hamilton Mountain, I would like to welcome to the Legislature today Mr. David Agnew, Ms. Judy Agnew and Mr. Ron Barker.

On behalf of the member for Welland, I'd like to welcome the students from the law program at Niagara College, in Welland. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, I'd like to welcome Jeff Muzzi, the father of page Daniel Muzzi. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

VISITOR

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd be remiss if I didn't point and welcome in the gallery a former employee of the Ministry of Energy, my daughter, Angie Robson.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Deputy Premier. You can imagine the shock when we read yesterday's headline in the Saskatoon StarPhoenix: "Windsor, Ont. Mayor Wants Residents to Fly West for Jobs." Windsor, as we all know, is the hometown of both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Economic Development. But thanks to this government's failed economic policies, the mayor of that fine city is looking outside Ontario to find work for his people—not to the two supposedly influential cabinet ministers.

This is just one glaring, and I trust very embarrassing, example of how, thanks to this government's failed economic policies, Ontario is setting records for people leaving the province. If the Premier and his colleagues won't listen to us, maybe they'll listen to the mayor of Windsor and admit that this government's policies of high taxation and suffocating red tape are killing jobs. Will you do that, Deputy?

Hon. George Smitherman: I hope the honourable member might at some point have the opportunity to speak with the mayor of Windsor, who I think was primarily focused on trying to build opportunities through their airport to service a broader array of communities. But our government has been tremendously committed to the people of Windsor, with about a billion and a half dollars of investment—investment which demonstrates our fundamental commitment to the understanding that a strong economy depends on having strong people and strong infrastructure as well.

It's sad that on a continual basis the honourable member, taking his lead from the federal finance minister, is trying to have a flashback in the province of Ontario, a flashback to a circumstance where the panacea of tax cuts was offered without the requisite acknowledgment that that leads to service cuts. It would be nice for the honourable member to stand up and start identifying all of those areas where he would like to see the cuts to services instead of standing up and asking on a daily basis about—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't know how the minister can explain the mayor of Windsor's actions with a straight face. In the last few months we've seen British Columbia attempt to lure Ontario workers away, we've seen Alberta hold job fairs here, and now we witness the spectacle of the mayor of Windsor, home of two senior Liberal ministers, outing this government and its failed economic policies, urging his citizens to go west for work—a shameful and sad situation in this wonderful province. But the mayor is stating the obvious: There are few jobs to be had in Windsor, and your sheep-like follower ministers have failed their community and this Liberal government is failing our province. Minister,

when will you stop ignoring the evidence—admit it, you're on the wrong track—and switch course?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member was part of a government that liked to pretend it was on the right track. Its right track was cutting taxes and cutting jobs. Today other jurisdictions compete for workers, but back in their day they called nurses hula-hoops and they sent them packing. That's the difference between our government and theirs.

We fundamentally believe in the idea that a strong economy depends upon strong people. That's why we have 100,000 additional opportunities in our post-secondary environment today, making sure that the well-trained workers are part of the attraction to our province. Theirs is a solution rooted in the past and rooted in ideology, and the people of the province of Ontario have seen that play. They don't want to return to a day where cutting \$5 billion because of tax reductions has the result of cutting services left, right and centre.

We're going to continue to invest in the people of Windsor because we know they have strength. That's why we've invested \$1.5 billion in the Windsor economy today.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Given the minister's recent comments about the challenges facing long-term-care residents, he has a lot of nerve quoting former members.

The deputy and his Premier won't listen to us; they won't listen to other provinces; they won't listen to the mayor of Windsor. They have ideological blinders on, continuing down a dead-end road of high taxes and increased red tape that has cost the province over 194,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004, and leading to have-not status for the province.

I have a quote from another individual that just maybe the Deputy Premier might listen to: "Corporate tax cuts will give Canada's exporters a tax advantage to replace the lost currency advantage. It's not a left-wing policy, it's not a right-wing policy. It's for families and workers, a sound policy." Stéphane Dion, January 2008.

Deputy Premier, the evidence is all around you. Will you take off the blinders and stop choking business?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Hon. George Smitherman: I do appreciate the pundits offering compliments on the results in the federal by-elections the other night.

The honourable member wants to talk about nerve speaking about health care. It was the Health Services Restructuring Commission which rolled through his communities and other communities in the province of Ontario and led to the closure of 28 hospitals in the province of Ontario. He talks about ideological blinders. He stands up today and asks for a return to those same policies—cut taxes as a revenue eliminator, so that they can force their agenda of cutting services for Ontarians.

We understand that a strong economy depends on strong people and on strong infrastructure. That's why our government has made those investments. But last

year's budget began an elimination of business education taxes. Capital taxes were reduced and eliminated for the manufacturing sector and the forestry sector in our fall economic statement and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: The next question is for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. This government—

Interjection: Who is it?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Yes, who is it?

This government is laying waste to the small business sector in this province, and this minister is missing in action—nowhere to be found. We saw the latest yesterday with a question from the member for Sarnia about how this government is taking business away from small and independent pharmacies across Ontario when it comes to WSIB claims. I'm sure the minister knows about this. It's a major concern in rural and northern Ontario.

Will the minister tell the House whether or not he has been in touch with the Minister of Labour to protest this decision to steal business from hard-working independent business people and the Minister of Labour's gall in describing it as a "great policy"? Have you done your job here? Have you talked to him about this?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: To the Minister of Labour, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I have indeed had an opportunity to speak with the chair of the WSIB about this particular policy. Whether it's employers—

Mr. Tim Hudak: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock, please. Pardon me; no, leave the clock running. A point of order?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Clearly the question was directed at a minister about if a minister is doing his correct job. I ask you if this is an appropriate referral considering the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister chose to refer to the Minister of Labour, who's responsible for the WSIB.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I was saying, I have had an opportunity to speak to this particular policy with the chair of the WSIB. The WSIB, as members know, is an arm's-length agency of this government. As I said yesterday, they are responsible indeed for their purchasing policy.

What this policy does is, it provides workers across this province with the ability to pick up the phone and order the material they need. It's a limited amount of material that's available under this program, but it gives them the convenience of—

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary.

1430

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, is the word "spineless" parliamentary?

The Speaker: Keep the clock running. Again, we had a discussion yesterday about words that are or are not parliamentary. I believe that that is a personal attack, and I would ask that the member withdraw his statement, please.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I will withdraw, at your request, Mr. Speaker. But it was also a personal question that dealt with the minister's activities—specifically with his activities.

I want to go back to him. During the pre-budget consultations, the finance committee heard from small business people. They heard about the effects this government's wrong-track economic policies are having on this critical part of the economy. The federation of independent business says that the number one problem for small and medium-sized business in this province is the increase in total tax burden and the burden of red tape. Will the Minister of Small Business please advise the House if he shares the concerns of the business owners he's supposed to represent at the cabinet table, and whether or not he's been advocating for lower taxes for this critical sector of our economy? Have you been doing your job?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to refer this back to the minister responsible for small business.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, it's interesting. About 15 minutes ago, I met with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This is what they told me: Our government is on the right track; we are doing the right thing. We are trying to decrease the burden on our small businesses, we are taking the right initiative by decreasing the capital tax on manufacturers, we are providing a capital cost allowance to manufacturers, and we are working with them closely. We are not sitting with them and just asking a question; we are actually out there, meeting with them and hearing them. I had five sessions with them to hear what needs to be done. We are doing exactly what our members are asking us to do.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't think we'd find too many people in the business community who would agree with that.

Here are some comments from the small-business community heard at the finance committee hearings, and I'm quoting:

"Taxes and regulation are becoming prohibitive for small businesses. No incentive to be in business in the first place."

Another quote: "Small business is unable to sustain the current level of taxation. We find more and more erosion of our profits, with the lion's share going to government."

This minister is supposedly the advocate of small business at the cabinet table, and one would hope that he understands that a strong economy is the only way we

can afford our hospitals, schools, and the programs that we all care about. Surely he's been pushing this message at the cabinet table. Can he confirm this? Has he been doing his job and standing up for small and medium-sized business in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I actually had the chance to meet with four independent groups in the last two months. I don't know how many people the Leader of the Opposition met that he can stand here and ask these questions.

Let me just say what Judith Andrew had to say. She said, "It's nice to see that the government is coming in with some tax relief that puts money in their pockets and helps them weather the coming storm."

That's exactly what we are doing: We are doing the right thing that needs to be done. We do have a plan on five fronts. But in addition to that, we are decreasing the capital tax, we are matching the capital cost allowance, we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The leader of the third party.

WINDSOR ECONOMY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, the Premier rejected the NDP's Buy Ontario plan because he said, "It would compromise our economy." The city of Windsor has already seen 35% of its manufacturing jobs vanish under the McGuinty government. That sounds like an economy that has already been significantly compromised. Given that the McGuinty government has already compromised the economy of the Windsor area with the destruction of 19,000 manufacturing jobs, what is the McGuinty government's real excuse for not adopting the NDP's Buy Ontario plan?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm not sure what makes a greater mockery of their very plan. Is it the opposition that they have to the expansion of the subway line to York University and beyond to York region, or is it in their very own spending as a party? They hire a polling firm from Winnipeg that they spend \$78,000 on and an ad agency from Vancouver that they spend more than \$100,000 on. So if the honourable member really believes in Buy Ontario, maybe he should demonstrate it with those dollars that he has authority over.

Mr. Howard Hampton: At least I don't fly to Chicago to seek an image consultant.

But the issue is this: Windsor has lost 19,000 manufacturing jobs, representing more than a third of its total manufacturing workforce. Things have gotten so bad that the mayor of Windsor is now trying to line up direct flights to fly unemployed Windsor workers to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

My question is this: Does the McGuinty government actually believe that long-distance commuting of unemployed Windsor workers to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan is better than a Buy Ontario policy for manufacturing jobs in Windsor?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's really important for people to know what the people of Windsor understand: We build great cars in my town and in this province. Ninety percent of all of our vehicles—90% of them—go to the United States. We are an export jurisdiction and we're proud of it.

Not only that, the people in Windsor know that for many years they have been leading the nation in terms of productivity. We are the first ones to understand the challenge that we're having right now. That's why this government has come forward in just these last four years with a billion and a half dollars, far more than any of you on the other side of this House could ever envision, in investment in the city of Windsor; basic infrastructure. But I will remind, people of Windsor, every member on that side of the House—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The sad reality is that the McGuinty government has been so effective that 19,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared from Windsor. The McGuinty government has been so effective that \$825 million in manufacturing wages has been ripped out of the Windsor economy. The two Windsor cabinet ministers in the McGuinty government have been so busy twiddling their thumbs that the mayor of Windsor is now saying that workers from Windsor should seriously consider commuting to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan because there aren't any jobs in Windsor.

I ask again: If that is your economic policy for unemployed workers in Windsor, that they should commute to jobs in Alberta and Saskatchewan, stand up and tell the people of Windsor that that's a better option than a Buy Ontario policy that would help to sustain and create manufacturing jobs in Windsor.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: The people of Windsor are in partnership with the government of Ontario, and we would like to think the federal government, who are not on the page yet, but we hope to bring them onside. What we know is, we've invested in Valiant, we've invested in Chrysler; we hope to invest in Ford along with the federal counterpart. What we hope is that our new medical school will bring new jobs; our new engineering school will bring new jobs. The \$400-million investment in our casino is bringing new jobs. We have invested in the city of Windsor and we will continue to do so.

1440

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Deputy Premier: The McGuinty Liberals could help sustain and create thousands of jobs in hard-hit communities now by implementing a meaningful Buy Ontario transit policy that would ensure that 50% of the work that goes into the building of transit vehicles is done here in Ontario. Will the Deputy Premier admit that anything less than 50% in

a Buy Ontario plan will only further compromise Ontario's manufacturing jobs?

Hon. George Smitherman: Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party, who refused to agree that the extension of the subway to York University, which would have created thousands upon thousands of jobs in the province of Ontario, should proceed. I appreciate that.

I know that some of his colleagues behind him were flabbergasted when he happened to come forward with the policy of opposing that extension, because that in itself, of course, would provide the opportunity for the stock associated with it to be produced in Ontario.

I can tell the member that we are working hard to ensure that when these projects are undertaken, the overwhelming amount of money spent on those projects—for instance, 82% in the Move Ontario program—will be spent in the province of Ontario. We look for any other opportunities we can to ensure that we have a fair opportunity to access—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I listened carefully for an answer to the question, but there was no answer. It's a no-brainer: If the construction work is going to happen here, the construction jobs will be here. But this is about manufacturing jobs. This is about ensuring, if we're going to spend money on urban transit, that manufacturing jobs happen here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government is missing in action on this. Meanwhile, municipal leaders have convened manufacturing summits with labour leaders and business leaders. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has endorsed our Buy Ontario plan. Workers at the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay have endorsed the Buy Ontario plan. We offer a Buy Ontario plan for this government to adopt.

My question is, when will the McGuinty government show some leadership and adopt a Buy Ontario plan that will sustain at least 50% of the manufacturing jobs in Ontario?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You can tell that the member has his usual simplistic answer to every challenge that's out there. I appreciate that his colleague, the member for Timmins—James Bay, who has been a good friend for a number of years, is, I think, sincere in the goal he sets. I think that what we have to look at, when we develop a policy of this kind, is the impact it would have overall on plants in the province of Ontario.

The member for Windsor, for instance, stated earlier today that in terms of exports, 90% of the vehicles produced in Windsor, in the instance she gave, were in fact exported. We want to ensure that the export markets that are available to those who produce transit equipment in Thunder Bay and elsewhere continue to be available. So we want to be cautious when we proceed with a plan to assist our people—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government's response seems to be that the United States is wrong in adopting a Buy America policy in terms of transit equipment, which results in 60% of the manufacturing work being done in that country. The McGuinty government seems to be saying that Germany is wrong, when it results in 98% of the manufacturing work being done in that country, and France is wrong, and Belgium is wrong—except, all of these countries have successfully built an industry around the manufacture of various kinds of transit vehicles.

Toronto reasoned that if they purchased from Thunder Bay, some 70% of the work would actually be done in parts plants around the greater Toronto area. Everybody else seems to see the logic. Where is the McGuinty government? Why are you on a different page from virtually every other transit manufacturing jurisdiction in the world?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, I appreciate this question coming from the individual who opposed the extension of the subway in Toronto to York University and all the jobs it would produce. He can smirk and smile over there about that, but his own members feel very uncomfortable about that—they disagree with him—and they should be.

May I say that our government is looking at every opportunity it can to be of assistance to all of those who are involved in any of these transit projects. He will note that the TTC, which has members on it who are members of the New Democratic Party—but they are members of the New Democratic Party who face the reality of being in office and having to come up with practical solutions—did not choose the 50% solution. In fact, they stipulated 25% Canadian content as part of their proposal. So I think the member should speak—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Minister, have you been working with the Minister of the Environment to reduce regulatory red tape for small and medium-sized businesses?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me thank the member for asking this question. Last year alone, we were able to reduce the paper burden impact on our small and medium-sized businesses by about 24 percentage points. When we release the number by the end of March this year, you will see similar progress made again this year. So there will be sufficient progress made on the small and medium-sized businesses because we think small and medium-sized businesses are critical to our economy. They employ 50% of the total workforce, and they are about 99% of all corporations in Ontario. That's why we are working very closely with them to reduce the

paperwork burden and, at the same time, making other reforms as well, so that we can move forward and make them more competitive in this competitive environment.

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, let me tell you about a new form—because you didn't really answer the first part of my question—that was introduced in August 2007 for the generation registration report requiring new and more detailed information and reporting. I've heard from some frustrated small business operators. Here's what one that uses a product to clean out pump bearing houses in their shop had to say:

"Why in heaven's name am I considered the producer of the cleaning fluid when in fact we only contaminate it with the product of our cleanings? You must think that all companies, no matter what size, employ chemical engineers and corporate lawyers to defrag the crap you write into your applications. There are thousands of small generators throughout Ontario (auto mechanics, pump/motor/fan/etc.) that are repair depots whose only waste is greases and oils and yet we are placed amongst the major chemical users insofar as waste generation is concerned.

"Give us a break, ease up and simplify this ludicrous yearly event."

Minister, will you follow this business person's advice and simplify this reporting process?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Our government has paid a lot of attention to making sure that there is a regulatory reform for the small and medium-sized businesses when we reduce the burden on our small and medium-sized businesses. All of our ministries have been working very closely together to make sure that that happens, and the Premier is providing strong leadership on that front to ensure that our environment becomes competitive and becomes the leader, not only in this country but in North America as well, in making sure that the environment is a great environment for small businesses to survive, succeed and start in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Yesterday, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tried to indicate that the NAN northern table discussions between the McGuinty government and Nishnawbe-Aski Nation were continuing. In fact, he said that directly to the media. I want to read a letter of today's date from the grand chief:

"As NAN grand chief, I suspended the participation of NAN leadership at the northern table Monday following a caucus of NAN chiefs who were in Thunder Bay for the court proceeding. This bilateral partnership with NAN leadership will remain suspended until further direction by chiefs-in-assembly."

Does the McGuinty government still want to tell this House and tell the media that the northern table discussions are continuing?

1450

Hon. Michael Bryant: Only the New Democratic Party would celebrate the idea that discussions would discontinue. In fact what is happening is that I'm continuing to have discussions with Grand Chief Stan Beardy. I spoke to him yesterday at some length; I'm speaking with him today; I spoke with him earlier in the week. I'm speaking with him, national Chief Phil Fontaine, Grand Chief Angus Toulouse and others, as well as reaching out to the acting chief in KI and the vice-chief and co-chief at Ardoch as we continue discussions to try to ensure that we continue to make agreements and find solutions that will allow for First Nations in the north and in the south to see more jobs and more prosperity for their communities. That's what we're fighting for.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I can tell members of the McGuinty government that misrepresenting the position of NAN chiefs is not going to be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask that the member withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I withdraw.

I can say to the government that stating that the northern table discussions are continuing when in fact the chiefs have suspended them is not helpful. Nor is it helpful when the minister tells the media that he has offered to pay the legal expenses of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation, when we then find out that he has offered \$200,000 when in fact the legal expenses are over \$700,000.

It seems to me that if the McGuinty government wants to proceed, there has to be some authenticity. When is the minister going to admit that it's the McGuinty government that is responsible for the conflict that has arisen? You're responsible because you've failed to meet your constitutional duty to accommodate and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes, we have said that we'll pay the legal fees of KI. We've said that we will assess the fees above \$200,000. Only the leader of the NDP would think that \$700,000 in legal fees is something that the government of any province should just pay, sight unseen. You'll excuse us for trying to assess the fees over and above \$200,000.

It's just part of an attempt by this government to try to come to a solution. But the member really disrespects all of those First Nations that have come to agreements with the mining industry across this province to build more jobs and build more revenue. I'm talking about Sagamok First Nation, Timiskaming First Nation, Webequie, Attawapiskat, Moose Cree—the list goes on and on. There are far, far more First Nations working with the mining industry and working with the government to the benefit of First Nations than the leader of the NDP would have us believe.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Attorney General. As you know, the terrible contaminated water tragedy in Walkerton which occurred in May 2000 resulted in a compensation plan that was to provide financial support and compensation for those who became sick, lost loved ones or incurred other losses. Minister, can you provide this House with a status update on this compensation plan?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank the member for Huron-Bruce for her determination and advocacy in this area.

As a result of the terrible tragedy in Walkerton that occurred in May 2000, the government reached a settlement with claimants in 2001. That settlement provided that the government fund compensation for those affected through an independent, court-overseen process. There is a court monitor; there are those specifically required to assess these claims. Bringing us up to date, over 9,000 cases have been settled. Over \$65 million has been provided to provide everything from compensation for the terrible loss to compensation for simple living expenses. It has been a very difficult time, but the court process has moved with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Minister, I do want to thank you for sharing the information. I can tell you that it is reassuring that this plan has been able to offer some help to those who have suffered so much. However, there are concerns, and they have been raised in the Walkerton area, about a number of claims that still remain outstanding. Can you assure the people of Walkerton that their claims will be dealt with in a fair and a timely manner?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I said, 9,000 cases have been resolved. There are approximately 101 cases remaining, all of which will be dealt with by government funding through an independent court-monitored process. So this means that the court monitor and the adjusters are working with every single one of the claimants, assisting them in assessing the claims, determining what additional information is required, determining how best to move forward. Every single one, I understand, knows the process, knows the next steps, has the options available. As a government we are absolutely determined to ensure that the necessary funding is in place to make sure that all claims, as assessed by the independent process, are resolved. We'll see this through to its conclusion. There are 101 left. I'm hoping for as expeditious a resolution as possible. Again, I thank the member for Huron-Bruce for her determined advocacy.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Deputy Premier: The Minister of Finance's so-called Investing in Ontario Act, introduced yesterday, is not exactly what he claimed

it would be. In fact, the bill defines an eligible recipient as "a person or entity, other than an individual but including a partnership whose members may be individuals, that does not carry on activities for the purpose of gain or profit." The word "municipalities," which he claimed, is nowhere to be found as an eligible recipient. Minister, isn't it true, then, that under that definition, a hall-of-fame Liberal slush fund recipient like the Ontario cricket association would qualify under this bill?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I think that all of us were very enthusiastic to see the response that came from noted municipal leaders like Hazel McCallion, the mayor of Mississauga. She's been one of those who has been waging a very aggressive and appropriate campaign to encourage the federal government to offer an appropriate level of support, recognizing the underlying circumstances for infrastructure.

As I had a chance in earlier questions from the leader, I would acknowledge that we really do believe fundamentally that investing in quality infrastructure is important. That's why, as this bill comes forward for debate, it will enjoy enthusiastic support from our side. We'll look forward to all the critiques and amendments that the honourable member might wish to offer, but for now we're delighted with the progress associated with the idea that our municipalities need further sustained investment.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know it wasn't the deputy leader; it's obviously the Minister of Finance who tried to pull a fast one on municipal leaders and MPPs by suggesting that this was about a municipal capital program for future surpluses. If you look at the bill, Deputy Premier, that was introduced yesterday, you can see that what the minister claimed last week is not in keeping with the facts when you actually read the bill. For example, cabinet would be able to decide "to whom payments would be made, the purposes for which payments" are to be made and "the method of and basis for calculating the payments." Again, the word "municipality" is not part of that bill.

Minister, it's nothing but another Liberal slush fund trying to escape the scrutiny of the Provincial Auditor. Will you agree just to scrap this bill altogether, this back-door Liberal slush fund, and come forward with a real program that's transparent for municipal capital?

Hon. George Smitherman: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Jim Watson: It's a little rich, coming from that party, talking about funding to the municipal sector. They're the kings and queens of downloading over there, and the municipal community will never forgive them or forget the punishment they suffered as a result of downloading costs that should be at the provincial level.

Let me quote the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Doug Reycraft, who said, after Minister Duncan introduced the Investing in Ontario Act, that it "is another significant step in the province's commitment to partnering with municipalities to help

ease the infrastructure challenges they are facing.” This is an act that is going to help municipalities, and we’re very proud of it. We call on that party to come forward and support this particular piece of legislation. We will then forgive you for all of the damage you did to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1500

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Quand M^{me} Rachelle St-Amand visitait sa mère dans une maison de soins de longue durée de Sudbury, elle a trouvé d’autres résidents dans le lit de sa mère, des selles sur les meubles, des sous-vêtements souillés sur le plancher et des résidents complètement nus qui se promenaient dans les corridors.

Madame St-Amand told the Sudbury Star that they need more one-on-one, and they don’t have the staff to do it. Does the minister think that our loved ones in long-term-care homes deserve a minimum standard of care of 3.5 hours?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the opportunity to answer the question. First off, I want to say that for anyone who is visiting a long-term-care home or has a resident there who doesn’t think the care is at an appropriate level, their responsibility is to call the action line which is posted inside the door of all long-term-care homes. I give the honourable member and all Ontarians the assurance that those compliance cases are dealt with in a very timely way.

I’m pleased as well that we are moving toward the implementation of a regulation that will have the effect of establishing a much higher standard of care than the New Democratic Party had when they were in office. She calls today for 3.5 hours, but the legacy of that party was 2.25 hours. In the province of Ontario today we have 2.95 average hours of care per day for all residents of long-term care, and being added to as we speak.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Minister, I’d like to read you a quote from the Sudbury Star dated March 11: “No one who talked to the Star blamed staff or management at long-term care facilities. The consensus is that they are overworked, doing the best they can with limited resources. The question each asks is: Why are resources so thin? Why is it so hard to treat our mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sisters and brothers with dignity in their final years?”

These questions are ones that all Ontarians are asking. What is the minister’s response?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that no community has had a greater increase in the number of long-term-care beds in Ontario than the Sudbury community. To date, that increase represents 47% more beds added in the last several years.

I want to say to the honourable member that I agree it’s important to have higher standards in long-term care. That’s why we’re already 0.6 hours per day higher than when the NDP was in office; 9.55 million additional hours of care today, every year, in the province of Ontario’s long-term-care homes than when the New Democratic Party was in office. Those will be added to as we make further investments in both nursing and personal-support workers. Accordingly, I do want to say to the honourable member that we believe these individuals deserve a high level of care. That’s why we’re so fundamentally committed to it and that’s why we’ve added an additional 9.55 million hours.

TOURISM

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. The tourism industry is a vital part of Ontario’s economy. We are all aware of the many challenges the tourism sector in Ontario has faced over the past few years: the high value of the Canadian dollar, higher gas prices, and the US proposal to increase border security through passport requirements. Tourism has increasingly become a more competitive industry, and we are competing on a global stage as never before. Would the minister inform members of the House about what the government is doing to confront these challenges?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for that question and for his clear understanding of how important tourism is to Ontario, to our economy and to strengthening our communities across this province.

I can tell you that Premier McGuinty and this government take tourism very seriously. Our government has been working closely with our tourism partners to address the challenges that, yes, are before us. That’s why we’re investing more in Ontario tourism today than ever before in our history. We continue to build those strong partnerships with our attractions, our festivals, our events, our restaurants and our associations. At this critical time, the industry has asked for a comprehensive competitiveness study of the industry, to be led by someone who has this strong understanding of the public sector and enterprise. That’s why I’m delighted that Greg Sorbara will be the chair of this most important study.

Mr. David Zimmer: The other day I was listening to the radio and I heard the leader of the official opposition say that there are no major attractions to get visitors to come to the city of Toronto and spend their money. As a member from one of the Toronto ridings, that was an appalling statement. In fact, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario have just undergone major renovations and are setting a world-class standard. The Toronto International Film Festival is world-renowned and attracted visitors from all over the world this year and every year.

I’d like the minister to expand on how the competitiveness study will look at how we can best leverage these great attractions that we have here in Ontario and particularly in the city of Toronto.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again, I would like to thank the member for Willowdale for that question. It's so unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition would knock down the tourism sector with a glass-half-empty attitude, a sector that employs over 300,000 people in this province. However, like I said before, our government realizes the importance of tourism, and that's why we're investing in tourism, investing in our economy. This is the largest employer of our youth. To make sure that happens, Greg Sorbara as the chair will be seeing what we're doing well in the province, where we've had some major successes, where we can improve and where we can take advantage of the many opportunities in this industry that is experiencing such phenomenal growth.

DEVELOPMENT FEES

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Work on the Hampton Hotel in Brantford has now been shut down on eight separate days by the Haudenosaunee Development Institute demanding payment. This is just one of several construction sites in Brantford shut down by protesters demanding extortion fees. Aside from the Hampton Hotel, there are the Mission Estates on Garden Avenue, First Urban at Gretzky and Henry, and the Grand River Avenue site of home builder Mike Quattrociochi.

Yesterday, you said you are "going to work" with Six Nations, municipalities and developers. We've had two years of construction shutdowns. Minister, when will you start working with area home builders?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Yes, we'll continue to work with area home builders, and we'll continue to work with municipal leaders and, yes, we will continue to work with Six Nations leadership. I've never heard the official opposition talk about any of those members working with Six Nations leadership. We're not going to pick and choose who in that community we're going to work with to try to make progress. I've expressed to band council at Six Nations, I have expressed to the confederacy in the Haudenosaunee Six Nations that obviously we all need to treat each other with mutual respect on all sides as we work through these issues, and I will continue to do so.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, Minister, the home builders do have questions. They obviously have questions on the land dispute negotiations and progress or lack thereof, the demands of HDI and the status of property rights in the province of Ontario. They want to meet with you face to face; your YouTube publicity stunts just don't cut it with the business community. What options do they have?

Mr. Quattrociochi has a question. If he were to bring his backhoe to Queen's Park, would the police stand by in the same fashion as in Caledonia and as in Brantford? On policing, Minister, Brantford Police Services need help. When are you going to stop blaming Ottawa, step up, fund and resource the extra policing required as a result of these confrontations in the city of Brantford?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Well, there you go, Mr. Speaker. You heard it pretty clearly right there. There's a

difference between Premier McGuinty's approach on this side of the House and the John Tory approach on that side of the House. On this side of the House, we understand that the police are independent of the government. It's not the Premier's police or the executive's police; it's an independent police force. It's a civil society.

1510

Over there, the former Premier and leader of their party—we know what his approach to this was: "Get those Indians out of the park," he said. That is not our approach, and that will never be our approach. We will continue to follow recommendations of the Ipperwash commission and not take any so-called leadership from the official opposition. Shame on you.

DIET SUPPLEMENTS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Does the minister support best nutrition practices for recipients on ODSP?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This government is very serious about the quality of life of those on ODSP or social assistance. Of course we support diet being part of good nutrition and a good way of life. That's why we have seen an increase in the diet budget and the number of people who are receiving supplements for a special diet.

Mr. Michael Prue: If that is the case, perhaps the minister can explain to this House why someone like Brian Woods of Lindsay, who has diabetes, had to have his food allowance reduced and his leg subsequently amputated; or why a person like Julie Sauvé of Bracebridge, who has multiple sclerosis, has been denied the high-protein, high-calorie diet she needs to maintain weight and muscle strength. Perhaps the minister will know. In both cases, your ministry decimated their special diet allowances.

My question back to you again: Is it the minister's intention to defend these reprehensible actions now that the case is before the Human Rights Commission?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm sure the member of the opposition party knows that I cannot comment on specific cases. But the thing that I can assure the member is that we are very serious about improving their quality of life and also their nutrition. That's why for the past five years the number of people receiving a special diet has more than doubled; I would say that it has tripled. The budget went from \$5 million to \$128 million.

I cannot comment on specific cases, but every case is being reviewed. If the case is before the Human Rights Tribunal, let's wait for the decision of the Human Rights Tribunal.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Education. This government believes that the best way to build a strong, publicly funded education system is to

involve our educational partners, including and especially the parents.

In January, this government announced continued funding for Parents Reaching Out grants. More than 1,300 projects are being funded through a \$2.3-million investment across the province in 2008-09. This funding will go to local school councils and also to regional parent engagement projects. Minister, what specifically does this mean for children and families in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The first and most important thing this means is that students will do better in school, because what the research says is that if their parents are involved in their education, they are going to achieve higher success. That is the fundamental of our parent involvement policy.

We're recognizing the vital role that parents play in the school community and in their children's lives. We've invested \$2.3 million, and that's \$1.1 million for individual school council projects and \$1.2 million for regional-provincial projects.

Some of the examples of the kinds of things that parents are doing with this money are workshops for parents to increase their engagement in their children's education. We know that there are some parents who are less comfortable coming into the school, and we need the parents in the school, to reach out to those parents, to bring them in and help them to be comfortable. Whether it's a language issue or whether it's just a familiarity issue, we need those kinds of workshops to help parents come into the school.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Minister, thank you for that information. I know that in my own riding, parents put a lot of time, energy and creativity into their applications for these projects. People in my riding are extremely pleased that we are able to support innovative projects in the Ottawa area that will encourage more parents to become engaged. People in the Ottawa area will benefit from over \$70,000 provided for school councils, for initiatives including parent seminars, speaking engagements and school events that involve families. As well, I understand that the Ottawa area has received almost \$82,000 in parent-driven regional initiatives, such as projects encouraging partnerships between the home and school through web-based communications and a parent-led student nutrition project.

Minister, I also understand that these Parents Reaching Out grants are one part of our plan to make it easier for all parents to participate in their child's education. Could you please enlighten us on what else our government is doing in this regard?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On top of those projects that bring parents into the school, those outreach projects, we've funded local school councils. We've provided money to school councils. We've provided money to regional parent bodies, and also we've created a provincial parent board. The purpose of all of those bodies is to enhance parent involvement and make sure that we get the best advice on what parents need to be involved.

We've also put in place 89 parenting and family literacy centres in high-needs neighbourhoods across the province. Those parent and family literacy centres are extremely important. They get young kids used to a school environment and some of the routines of early childhood education—ready for kindergarten—but they also bring parents into the school and allow the parents to understand what the routines of the schools are. So those are related issues—as well as a website, abc123, that allows parents to look for tips to help their kids with homework.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Day after day in the House we've been hearing of the pressure of 180,000-plus jobs lost, mostly in manufacturing in Ontario, but all we're hearing from you is a response not recognizing the drag on the economy of high taxes, high energy prices, as well as red tape. In fact, Deputy Premier, you're stifling the opportunities in the province of Ontario. What we hear generally is the typical Liberal response of, "Don't worry, be happy."

In an article today in my riding of Durham there is a response from April Cullen, and I'm going to quote here. It says, "I suspect we'll see aftershocks of the layoffs down the road when people start to exhaust their savings and exhaust other benefits...."

Deputy Premier, what is your plan to deal with not just the aftershock but with the dismal state of the economy, not just in Durham but in the province of Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Economic Development.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Actually, I had an opportunity to be in Durham and speak with the chamber of commerce there. I will tell you it was one of the warmest receptions I've received, in particular when I spoke about the requirement for the federal and provincial governments to work together when we face such challenging times in the manufacturing sector.

On that same day that I was in Durham, General Motors actually spoke of the potential of an investment in Oshawa very much related to this area. As this member knows well, we are specifically asking the federal government to join us, to help these companies make major investments. A company the size of General Motors, for example, would benefit from the tune of about a \$10-million corporate tax cut, just based on our finance minister's last economic update. That's the kind of initiative that they see the Ontario government coming forward with, not to mention the level of support that we have shown so far.

1520

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, that is the minister who comes from a riding where they're giving advice to send people out west to get a job. To have her in charge of anything in the economy is an absolute shame. In fact, I can't imagine I hear—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to leave the clock running. I just ask that we have some respect for the individual members. In your initial question, you talked about laughing at the ministry, and you've just taken another jab at the minister. I just ask that we at least have some respect for one another.

Mr. John O'Toole: With all due respect, I think what I'm looking for is a little respect from the opposition. I'm asking the question not on behalf of the opposition party, but on behalf of the staff and the councillors of Durham region. They're concerned here, Minister, about the aftershock of your failed plans in the economy. Your plans have been high taxes, high energy and more red tape, and job losses are the result.

The question I have for you, Minister, is very simple: What's your plan to deal with the impending disaster in the economy and the impact on social welfare rolls in the region of Durham and the province of Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think that I would take my cues, rather, from the Durham economic development commission, which works very closely with my ministry. In fact, next week they will be joining us in Alberta, along with 208 delegates from the manufacturing sector here in Ontario, because we are an activist government. We understand the challenges that manufacturers are facing in this province. We are the largest manufacturing jurisdiction anywhere in North America, second only to California. So when there's a challenge, we recognize how large that challenge is. That's why we're coming to the table with programs like our Next Generation of Jobs Fund, the largest investment package ever in the world: \$1.15 billion, along with a 45-day service guarantee.

The people in Durham know full well how active we are. Big companies and small companies also see the work we're doing to discover new markets, new products, and bring innovation. Ontario has a future, and it will have a future under this government.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my name in full support.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

That comes from Toronto. I support this petition and affix my name to it.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition, again presented by my community. Mr. Ed Green is spearheading this petition. It's the third day in a row now that I've been reading this same petition, with different signatures. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

"Whereas this disease requires patients' fast access to public washrooms;

"Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

"Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations;

"Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

"We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Michael, who is here with me today.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. John O'Toole: The petition that I would like to present on behalf of constituents and the people of Ontario reads as follows.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

"Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

"Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

"Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province's affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

"Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

"Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

"Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Accept its responsibility and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent and healthy home."

And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

HOME CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I hereby affix my name to this petition.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition has to do with fairness for Ontario workers. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus, unemployed are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end this discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

1530

LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have affixed my signature to this as I am in agreement.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Peterborough.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. It's nice to see you in the chair.

We have a petition regarding children and smoke-free cars, in support of Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

Madam Speaker, I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me from Bethel Tabernacle of Preston and Knox Preston Presbyterian Church:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Madam Speaker, congratulations on assuming the chair.

My petition is to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It was provided to me by Meadowvale secondary student Brianne Westland. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I am pleased to affix my signature and to fully support this petition and to ask page Fatima to carry it.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was signed by a lot of my constituents, but it primarily came from the Community Living Tillsonburg folks. We'd like to thank them for circulating the petition. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario disability support program is designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities who are in financial need, or who want and are able to work and need support; and

"Whereas it is appreciated that the McGuinty government increased the maximum monthly rates in 2004, 2006 and 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to establish an independent commission to make

recommendations for setting social assistance rates. These rates need to be raised to provide for the real cost of living.”

I'd like to thank you, on behalf of all the people who signed it, for letting me read this petition.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Mr. Mario Sergio: I have received a petition signed mostly by residents of my own riding. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'd like to read it and have it included in the record.

“Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

“Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

“Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

“Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province's affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

“Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

“Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

“Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Accept its responsibility and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent and healthy home.”

I want to thank the residents of my area. I'd like to supply the petition and have it be recorded as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2008, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Beaches—the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just a bit to the west. It's very good to see you in the chair.

It's been more than eight months since the leader of the Liberal Party made a commitment, a promise, that he would be taking action on climate change in this province, that he would produce a plan, provide a plan, would put it on the table, that he would provide transparency in action, so that in fact we would see movement in Ontario, we would see action taken to deal with climate change and also to reshape our economy so we'd have a green economy, one that would provide us with the jobs that we know are going to be in demand in the 21st century. That plan didn't hit the table.

On November 30 we had the speech from the throne. There was a statement in that speech from the throne about the government's ongoing commitment to climate change action, about the targets that had been set, about the need to meet those targets. Frankly, it is now three months later, there's no legislation before us, there's no plan before the House and there's no concrete material for us to critique. If we look at Quebec, if we look at British Columbia, we see that they have climate change plans. The one in Quebec is funded at \$200 million a year. It's set to meet the Kyoto targets. The one in British Columbia is a far weaker document, but at least there is a plan, something that people can look at, that they can criticize, analyze and maybe, in the course of time, something that could be improved. We don't have even that.

This is a government that has decided that climate change is a tremendous marketing opportunity but not an area where they really want to do the fundamental work necessary to come to grips with the issue.

1540

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond to the comments made yesterday by the member from—I want to get his riding correct; I know his name very well—Niagara West–Glanbrook. I was here for your comments yesterday, and I just wanted to comment briefly, in the short time that I have.

I guess what we are concerned about, as a provincial government, is the disparity between the federal government and the provincial government, and especially the equalization clawback. Ontario is giving money to the federal government and we're not getting back our fair share when it comes to, just for example, unemployment, because I think there's a \$4,000 disparity in terms of what we get back here in Ontario and what the federal government provides, or at least collects and provides elsewhere in Canada. So we will continue here on this side of the House, as the government, to try as much as possible to fight for Ontario and to fight for the people of Ontario.

In the comments yesterday, we were talking about the throne speech and the importance of what the government here plans to do in the next four years. We're going to continue to put our message out, that Ontario requires its fair share, and we'll continue to fight for its fair share in terms of what we put out in money to the Ottawa government and what we get back. We want to be able to be on a level playing field. I think that's the

number one issue here, one of the key issues this government is going to continue to fight for, led by our Premier, Dalton McGuinty. He's obviously made that a high priority. I support that as well, and many others do.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also want to compliment the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook because I know that as our finance critic he has a very firm grasp of the dilemma that faces Ontario, all of which was kind of omitted from the throne speech. In fact, I heard a trace comment from the member who has just spoken here, kind of blaming Jim Flaherty. That's kind of what I heard; it's sort of like the equalization stuff and the transfer payments. They should realize that their own purpose spending has gone up inordinately, and one has to ask oneself, as our critic does regularly, "Are we any better off?" The real test of this is, we're spending more, but are we any better off? There's homelessness that we've seen today brought about. There are almost 200,000 people without jobs. The economy is struggling. And yet, "Don't worry; be happy." It's tragic, quite honestly.

I have just visited about six or seven nursing homes in my riding, and they gave me this card which says, "Long-term care needs more than a Band-Aid." You know yourself, Madam Speaker, that they're asking in this province—I'm going to read this. It's to Dalton McGuinty, the Premier of Ontario. It says: "Please tell government to provide the \$513 million required in this budget for the necessary additional staff and supplies, so that:

"—residents aren't rushed to meals or left waiting for help to go to the bathroom;

"—homes can provide more weekend and evening programs, improve meal services, increase the average number of daily incontinence changes..."—we know what the Minister of Health has said about that; it's shameful;

"—homes can maintain housekeeping, laundry and related services."

There simply isn't enough for anybody in Ontario, and they think it's okay. I'm waiting for the response from the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Excuse me, Madam Speaker. I was going to do another situation, so I'm going to discuss it with my colleague—just a second.

Mr. Tim Hudak: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: The rotation began with the NDP and then the government and the official opposition. I'm just checking with you—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Yes, and there are four rotations.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So the NDP, if they wanted to have one—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): They have another rotation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: A two-minute rotation on the throne speech.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Yes, they do. Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I thank all my colleagues for their comments on my speech last evening.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm doing responses.

To my colleague from Scarborough Southwest: He talks about equalization payments. I understand that if you observed the economic policies, the misguided economic policies, of the McGuinty government of going to the highest tax rate on business investment, the high-energy policies and increasing the red tape burden on businesses, you may observe that they have pushed Ontario closer to actually being have-not status. A rather bizarre way—if that's their intention, and I hope not—of addressing the equalization issue would be for Ontario to become a have-not province. Frighteningly, we're getting increasingly close to that. It's hard to contemplate: an Ontario that we've always known as the engine of growth in all of Canada, and a place that attracted others to come and work and raise a family, being a have-not province and getting equalization from the rest.

Don Drummond, for example, the chief economist at TD, said, "Ontario is not so far from being an equalization province." Douglas Porter, the deputy chief economist at the Bank of Montreal, says, "While the arcane equalization calculations may still peg Ontario officially as a 'have' province, the reality is far less friendly for the provincial economy—Ontario is becoming relatively poorer each year."

My understanding is that initially when the McGuinty government took office, our per capita GDP was about \$400 above the equalization bar, and now it is barely treading water above that bar. I think it's frightening to contemplate that Dalton McGuinty's harmful economic policies have done so much damage to our economy, to job creation and to the expectations of working families and seniors in our province that we would be that close to becoming a have-not province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to address the issues in and not in the throne speech today. I'd like to start off with economic development. For far too long, the problem not addressed in this province and in this country is the real root of the economic conditions. That, I firmly believe, is the lack of Ontario-Canadian ownership and controlling shares in major Ontario-Canadian corporations. In the last 10 years, I have watched the deterioration and erosion of our base industries in this province and, in fact, throughout this country. Many Ontario companies are actually multinational, foreign owned. Don't get me wrong, I'm not against the Premier's global market. However, why is it that so many companies with highly skilled Ontario workers don't keep the jobs, the production and the ownership in Ontario or at least in Canadian hands?

Why would Ontario ownership be good? Because whenever we hit a recession or a downturn in the economy, these foreign-owned companies come to the government for subsidies and handouts of Ontario taxpayers' money. They threaten plant closures, leaving the province and moving back to their countries of origin or, even worse, they move to a Third World country where they abuse the workforce by paying low, below-the-poverty-line wages with no benefits and poor working conditions that we long ago fought because we knew that they were completely wrong.

What happens in these cases in Ontario is that these companies are not only leaving, shutting down, but they're removing the equipment and setting up shop in other countries. The latest example in Hamilton: Two weeks ago Amcam shut down. The usable equipment was sold to a German firm, and the outdated equipment will be scrapped and the building sold. This affected unionized, non-unionized and management workers, thrown out on the street with their severance, benefits, pension and other hard-earned security under threat of loss after 30 years plus loyal years of service.

The NDP has introduced a Buy Ontario strategy, but I could go further by encouraging, promoting and supporting Ontario-Canadian ownership to strengthen our economy. When employees and owners have a commitment to our local communities and economies where their families participate in the same local schools, recreation programs and other activities as their employees, everyone is spending in Ontario.

Recently, GM in Oshawa shut down its fourth most profitable plant and moved to the States—fourth, Madam Chair, fourth most profitable company in the States—leaving hundreds here in Ontario with early retirement, buyouts, job transfers and job losses. Why? Because they took our jobs back to the States and we did nothing to protect our Ontario workers. Yet we keep giving money to the Big Three and foreign-owned corporations. What security do we have for that money? What future handouts do these large foreign-owned companies want?

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The NDP's Ontario manufacturing investment tax credit would help sustain existing jobs, create the conditions for new manufacturing jobs and ensure better economic conditions in Ontario manufacturing communities. Other incentives should ensure job security of Ontario workers to ensure that companies remain viable, productive and, in Ontario, Canadian-owned.

If companies decide to pull out of Ontario, then Ontario taxpayers, after the employees, should have the right of second claim on the equipment, buildings and land, equal to the amount of the loan plus interest.

Some examples of foreign-owned companies that have pulled up stakes, equipment, employee salaries and benefits, sold the land and left Hamilton an industrial ghost town: Westinghouse; International Harvester; Firestone; American Can; Dominion Glass; Otis Elevator; Allan Industries; Procter & Gamble; Continental Can; Camco. And some of the Stelco

subsidiaries: Canada Works; Frost Fence; the number 2 rod mill; the 20 inch mill; the plate mill; Brantford works; Page-Hersey Works; Welland Pipe; Parkdale Works, sold to Mittal; and John Inglis. These are just some of the many companies that I could list that have moved, causing economic hardships, downturns and struggles for the city of Hamilton and the surrounding areas.

When I started at Stelco in the early 1970s, there were over 13,000 hourly paid employees in Hilton Works, Stelco's major plant; another 3,000 to 4,000 salaried employees. When I left the plant in June 2007, there were less than 2,000 hourly paid employees and less than a few hundred salaried employees. That's a total of less than 3,000 workers.

If the government had encouraged Canadian ownership and sunk money into the industry with conditions, we still would have a thriving plant with a sizable workforce. Yes, we would have lost some jobs through technical change, but we would have significantly more jobs in Hamilton than we do now. What would have happened? Would we have had money being spent in Hamilton to better our economy?

The problems facing Hamilton and its surrounding communities are alarming. The recent McGuinty government announcement of a low-income dental program, meals in schools and affordable housing falls so short of real needs and is just another band-aid solution. In Hamilton, 20% of our total population live below the poverty line; over 90,000 children, singles and seniors. This is a disgrace in a province that has all it takes for a stable economy.

It's obvious that the real root of the problem is the lack of jobs. Jobs stimulate the economy, allow workers to provide housing, food, and education for their families, and help their seniors and parents. The impact of the loss of 200,000 manufacturing jobs over the last four years is seen in houses lost to mortgage default, increased individual debt, increased numbers of social assistance recipients, and food bank clients. In the last few years, thousands of these good-paying manufacturing jobs have left Hamilton.

Our tax base for the Hamilton area was—was—70% industrial, manufacturing and business, and 30% residential. Today, it's the exact opposite. This has put serious financial burdens on seniors trying to maintain and live in their homes, where we have one of the highest levels of property taxes in the province. How does this government expect people to survive in this economic environment? After Mr. McGuinty's announced financial infusion is split up throughout this province, how much real money will actually get to those in need in Hamilton?

Pollution: I don't recall anything in the throne speech that will help the problem of pollution in Hamilton. We have ongoing problems with emission violations. The MOE needs more inspectors, strong enforcement of their own laws and regulations, more prosecution of violators and more sizable fines.

The MOE constantly allows companies to ignore the certificate of approval conditions with respect to community liaison committees. In some cases, the companies have even gone so far as to disband—disband—these committees and replace the membership with company puppets.

Why does the ministry not enforce its other conditions in these certificates of approval? When violators are caught dumping illegal contaminants and hazardous materials into non-hazardous landfills, why are they not dealt with quickly and to the full letter of the law? The full letter of the law needs to be rewritten. It does not properly protect the people of Hamilton and the province. The record of the McGuinty government on environmental protection is hazardous to the people of Ontario.

When I sat on the Taro landfill community liaison committee, we constantly were up against the wall with the MOE—the lack of communication. It constantly challenged our recommendations and amendments. The lack of inspectors to enforce the truck content rules: for example, often only one inspection, maybe two, on 500 trucks. When violators were caught, the response by the company would be, “How can we dig it out? We don’t know where we put it.” Stuff went into the landfill that even the state of Michigan wouldn’t take. After the blatant violations, these companies were allowed to continue operating with the same minuscule amount of MOE enforcement. As far as I can see, not much has changed in the intervening years, but how could I know for sure as the MOE allowed the landfill company to disband the company in direct violation of the certificate-of-approval rules? So no community oversight now occurs.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act: The WSIB has a new plan called the Road to Zero. What it should be called is “road to poverty.” In my discussions with injured workers, consultants’ groups, the Ontario Federation of Labour and my colleagues, they have identified the three most critical areas that need immediate attention. I will paraphrase their publications: “The whole system of experience rating must be rewritten, with significant input from labour organizations and front-line workers who help injured workers through the process. Businesses, particularly those who do not follow the rules, must have their input as well.”

I want to read to you from an excellent document, *The Perils of Experience Rating*, by the Ontario Federation of Labour:

“Experience rating adjusts premium rates based on an individual employer’s claims history. In theory this provides an incentive for safety and injury prevention in the workplace. In theory, employers receive rebates on their premiums for good claims records and are penalized for poor claims records.

“Experience rating is touted as a major incentive to improve workplace health and safety by its employer advocates. To date there is absolutely no evidence to support this claim.

“But there is evidence that experience rating promotes many negative practices. Premium costs can be reduced by covering up or misreporting accidents, by forcing workers back to work before they are ready, by paying sick employees wages rather than have them receive benefits, or by simply contesting all claims, including the most well-documented and well-founded cases.”

How can anyone think this is acceptable?

The OFL report goes on:

“Experience rating has a very negative effect on injured workers. It undermines the basic principles underlying the compensation system. It weakens the collective liability system; burdens small employers for the gain of the bigger ones; effectively denies injured workers their legitimate benefits; produces nightmares instead of peace of mind for injured workers and their families; and increasingly makes the system more and more adversarial.”

Why would anyone want to put a worker already injured through this stress?

The OFL report says it all:

“Tens of millions of dollars are drained out of the WSIB’s accident fund each year by employers who have learned how to play the game of experience rating. In fact, according to the WSIB figures, rebates have exceeded penalties by more than half a billion dollars in the last four years alone—\$114 million in 2006, \$124 million in 2005, \$115 million “in 2004 and \$169” million “in 2003, for a total of \$522 million. That is not the total amount of rebates, but the amount by which rebates exceeded the penalties!”

“The results of OFL studies confirm what the OFL has already known—a shocking disconnect between the declared goals of experience rating and the way that bad performing employers are taking advantage of the program.

“If the theory of experience rating programs is to encourage investment in health and safety, why are so many employers with a history of serious violations and convictions rewarded with significant—significant—rebates?

Injured Workers’ Consultants produced a document, *Deeming Adds Insult to Injury*, which was submitted to the WSIB on Bill 187 interim policies.

“The deeming problem: Most wage losses were not based on the real life situations of workers. Deeming an injured worker to have an income that he or she does not have was the rule, not the exception. Deeming was not restricted to situations where a suitable job had been offered to the injured worker and declined.

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“A’ had a high school education and worked in the social service field. In her 40s, she injured her right, dominant hand and developed a permanent injury. At the time of her accident, she was a single mother earning \$14.50 an hour. She received approximately four months’ retraining as a customer service representative. She did well. The LMR provider sent her a letter congratulating her on her successful retraining. But she was unemployed and looking for work. As in a cruel fantasy world, this

did not matter. The board deemed her to be working as a customer service representative at the rate of \$9.50 an hour, the entry level wage for that field according to the wage data of the NOC (National Occupation Classification published by the federal government). This gave her a weekly 'wage loss' award of \$122.88 a week, based on deemed wages she did not have.

"Although trying her best, no employer has hired her. Unable to live or support her child on \$122.88 a week, she was forced to turn to social assistance. The WSIB reviews these decisions for six years after the accident. At the last review, she was still unemployed, despite her best efforts. Rather than causing reconsideration in her favour, the board 'deeming machinery' simply deemed that, by now, she should have been earning higher wages as an experienced customer service representative. She was not only deemed employed, but deemed better employed, deemed to get a raise to \$14.35 an hour, the average wage for experienced customer representatives according to the NOC wage guide. Her wage loss compensation was reduced to \$38.24 per week. She was still unable to attain suitable employment.

"There are thousands of injured workers in Ontario who are deemed to have post-injury jobs they do not have. Some are receiving 'wage-loss compensation' based on a cruel assumption. Some are receiving nothing at all, pushed completely out of the system because they are deemed able to return to employment with no loss of earnings. Many of them spoke to board officials and a string of successive Ministers of Labour and MPPs. The problem became evident from the outset of the wage-loss system. Steve Mahoney, a former Liberal labour critic, had criticized the policy and practice of deeming in his April 1994 report called *Back to the Future*. The board and the political leaders all listened, the injustice was evident, and injured workers anxiously awaited a proposed solution.

"What is striking in this case is the total failure by either the WSIB or the WSIAT to take the legislative history and the government's explanatory purpose into account in any way. In the case of Bill 187, we are fortunate to have the legislative history and purpose readily available. It should not be ignored."

This continues:

"By removing the term 'deem' and including the word 'available' the legislative intention is to 'help injured workers retain benefits when work they could perform after rehabilitation is not available.' The policies subvert this intention. The interim policies only consider whether or not a job might be available to the injured worker at the point of determining the SB. The policies ignore whether or not a suitable job is 'available' at the more crucial point of determining and reviewing the LOE. The purpose of the legislative change is not to deal with the SEB decision-making. The intention of the legislation is to 'help injured workers retain benefits when work they could perform after rehabilitation is not available or suitable.' The legislative change was made to eliminate deeming in the calculation of LOE benefits.

"In the interim policies, deeming continues completely unrestricted in determining the LOE. It is our experience that in almost in all cases, post-accident earnings are determined without regard to the actual wages, if any. The policy explicitly provides for deeming injured workers to be fully employed at good wages when they are in fact unemployed and may never return to employment because no suitable job is available to them.

"We see, instead, that the board has kept the old deeming system intact as if Bill 187 had never seen the light of day.

"Next steps

"The net effect of the new policies of WSIB will be greater injustice for injured workers. We cannot emphasize enough that the consequences of deeming are going to be more negative and more widespread than they were before these interim policies. The policies must be made consistent with the purpose of the legislation and the intention of the Legislature."

Injured workers deserve inflation protection: Bill 187 was introduced by my colleague MPP Andrea Horwath, the former NDP WSIB critic. Injured workers would receive a regular cost-of-living increase to their WSIB compensation payments under this legislation, which called for "annual indexing of Workplace Safety and Insurance Board benefits for injured and disabled workers, retroactive to 1994."

As MPP Horwath stated, "Injured workers are forced to turn to social assistance and food banks because their compensation payments aren't adjusted for inflation. Year after year, their compensation continues to dwindle in value. Indexing is long overdue and is the just and fair thing to do."

Why does this government think it's appropriate to shift the cost of an injured worker's plight from the WSIB onto another ministry and onto the hard-funded local food banks and social service agencies?

The WSI act, 1997, provides for two indexing factors to be applied each year to insured payment amounts. The indexing factor to be used depends on the type of payment. One indexing factor is equal to the percentage change in the CPI. The other indexing factor is calculated by reducing the percentage change in the CPI according to a formula set out in the act.

Any worker in Ontario should expect inflation protection. So why would we not automatically provide this for these workers, who, through no fault of their own, are forced to receive their income from WSIB?

This government seems to find success in one ministry by foisting the problem onto another ministry and subjecting the working women and men of Ontario to a vicious game of hide and seek.

I was very disappointed in the lack of substantive content in the throne speech. There are many serious issues that need to be dealt with now, not by this government making inadequate announcements with great fanfare on limited content. It's time that we get down to the real business of Ontario's economy: protecting workers, both on the job and injured; protecting

our environment by actually enforcing the laws of this province; and providing support to our manufacturing sector that ensures good-paying jobs that are bound to stay in Ontario if we get the co-operation of government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Charles Sousa: We need a partner, not an adversary. Our cities are facing new challenges. My community of Mississauga is growing at a rapid pace, placing new demands on infrastructure. This, combined with the cost of social services previously downloaded, is putting more pressure on our city to increase property taxes. In response to these challenges, the McGuinty government has begun to upload programs and provide funding for key infrastructure projects. However, even with continued provincial support, the city is forced to consider a new 5% levy.

We understand that what municipalities need is a partner, not an adversary. We need to continue working together so that our cities maintain affordable taxes, strong social programs and economic stability. Some of the provincial initiatives to relieve the financial burden on the municipalities include increased uploading on land ambulance funding; public health funding; ODSP and Ontario drug benefits will begin uploading this year; and increased funding for affordable housing programs and rent supplement programs.

But our city needs a federal partner as well. While we make these investments, the federal government still lacks a national housing strategy, making Canada the only major country in the world without one. On top of that, Ontario workers are receiving \$4,000 less in EI benefits than Canadians in other provinces.

Our plan to strengthen municipalities doesn't stop with uploading. We must invest in infrastructure now. That is why we've committed to an unparalleled amount of support for transportation needs, including two cents per litre of the provincial gas tax for public transit.

The federal Minister of Finance recently announced that Mississauga will receive \$83 million for transit in the city. The city is still awaiting those funds. I encourage the minister to not delay any further. We need to work with the municipalities now. The McGuinty government has come to the table for Mississauga; I encourage the federal government to join us in partnering with Ontario's municipalities. Please, let's keep working together.

Mr. Pat Hoy: I'm pleased to rise and make a few comments on what I think is an excellent throne speech put forth by our government. I've listened intently to the debate and comments made by others in this expanded House of some 107 members now. Many of the members made their initial speech, commonly known as their maiden speech. They did exceedingly well. It was good to learn about their ridings and the enthusiasm they bring to this House on all sides of the aisle here.

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In our throne speech, we did talk about five points in particular:

- major investments in the education and skills of our people, which is paramount in our workforce today in a very highly competitive world, a world that is getting exceedingly smaller, with the Internet and shipping of goods around the world happening in virtually every country;

- keeping our taxes competitive, which includes phasing out the capital tax to help our businesses;

- supporting innovation and the good, high-paying jobs of the future through, for example, the new \$165-million Ontario venture capital fund;

- accelerating the largest investment in the province's infrastructure in 50 years, including Move Ontario 2020, a historic expansion of public transit, something that many communities are seeking; they're excited to hear about the initiatives that'll flow from the throne speech; and

- forming key partnerships, such as those formed through the automotive investment strategy, which has helped to leverage \$7 billion in new auto investment, and the new Next Generation of Jobs Fund, which will create new good, high-paying jobs by developing new clean and green technology.

We're going to expand on all of these points and others as we address the needs of the people of Ontario, immediate and into the future. I am looking forward to hearing the budget next week.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to comment on the speech made by my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. He's addressed a fundamental problem here, and that's the hollowing out, the impoverishment, of manufacturing Ontario. There's no question when he speaks about the situation in Hamilton—the loss of jobs; the loss of a stable manufacturing base; the reduction on an annual basis, on a constant basis, of good-paying jobs—that he's talking about a fundamental problem that this province is facing, one that this government is not addressing.

Earlier this year, I had an opportunity to speak with my federal colleague Irene Mathysen from London. In the last 12 months, London lost 5,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector. Minister Bentley, earlier today, in responding to Howard Hampton's comments, said that things were fine in London. Well, I'd love to see that headline in London, I'd love to see the kind of response he would get in London, because I have to tell you, there's a lot of unhappiness out there. When I was talking to Irene Mathysen, one of the people that she'd been in touch with was a member of the local city council, a person who, on a part-time basis, was also a process server. His service of mortgage foreclosure notices has gone up 75% since last November. I think that speaks volumes about the reality of life in manufacturing Ontario.

When the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek talks about the property tax burden in Hamilton, I know the problem here in Toronto as well. Cities have been left to their own devices. This has been hugely problematic. They have to deal with profound social problems on a tax

base that cannot support those programs, that cannot support those issues. The member was entirely correct in his comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I heard the comments of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I really support him in his attempt to help workers in Hamilton and across the province. I think he's to be commended for that. But the one thing I can't understand from the NDP is, you've got a federal Minister of Finance telling people across the world not to invest in Hamilton, not to invest in Stratford, not to invest in London, and the NDP is silent. They're beating up on the people of Hamilton by saying that, because Hamilton is part of Ontario, as we well know, and London is; so when he beats up Ontario, he beats up all our communities. The silence of the NDP is really difficult, especially when the fact is—when our property taxes are higher, why does Mr. Flaherty claw back billions of dollars from the taxpayers of Ontario so we can have lower property taxes in Nova Scotia, Quebec and Newfoundland? We have to fix the holes in the roofs in Brighton, Ontario, Hamilton and Orléans; we have to help our own people now. Yet the federal government keeps clawing these billions of dollars every day out of small businesses in Ontario. The NDP are totally silent about that. They do not stand up and say that the equalization clawback is unfair to the hard-working people in Ontario and that that has to stop.

This equalization clawback amounts to \$20 billion a year taken out of our pockets and the pockets of our constituents. Yet the NDP are silent on Mr. Flaherty's billion-dollar equalization clawback. They let Mr. Flaherty beat up on Hamilton, beat up on London, and say, "Don't invest in Hamilton." That's why you've got to stand up and stop defending Mr. Flaherty. Defend your own people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Paul Miller: With all due respect to my colleague across the floor, I find his comments quite interesting. For the last four years, I will inform the member, I have been lobbying down in Ottawa, fighting for these very things. I've been fighting for jobs; I've been fighting for more training; I've been fighting for all the things that your party is now touting as theirs. We've been doing this for years.

As for as being silent—hardly. The problem is, we're always misdirected with things that are insignificant, things that are not important, by both parties. We never get our platform in front of them because the media doesn't deal with it. We have a big issue, we have all kinds of issues, but we're always put in the back seat. We can't get our programs forward because the Liberals don't want to deal with them.

Let's talk about the past election. Ninety per cent of that election in this province dealt with education. They didn't talk about our plans; they wouldn't even listen to it. They talked all about education and they went after the Tories on that. Every time we got into a debate, they wouldn't discuss these issues. And they say the NDP

isn't? Sir, I wish you could have followed me for the last five years and seen how I went down to Ottawa and tried to fight for workers' pensions—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: They just fight with Ottawa.

Mr. Paul Miller: They fight with Ottawa. They blame Ottawa for everything. If this Liberal Party is so concerned about the people of Ontario, then why doesn't Dion vote that government down and bring it to the people of this province?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you. Further debate?

Before the Chair recognizes the member, it's appropriate to acknowledge that there are some guests here. Oh, I'm sorry. Am I on the wrong rotation? I am. I'm sorry. That's the Speaker's error. I apologize. I was assuming that we were on the maiden speech of one of our new members who is going to be speaking later, but in fact we have another new member who's speaking now: the member for Ajax–Pickering. I apologize for that.

The member for Ajax–Pickering.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would like to split my time today with the member from Hamilton Mountain in my inaugural address.

Just as I am honoured and humbled to be the elected provincial member for the new Ajax–Pickering riding, I'm also privileged to address our provincial Legislature today. The boundaries I represent include, for the first time, 100% of the municipality of Ajax as the major portion, and generally all of the rural area of the city of Pickering: north from Finch Avenue and the 401 in some areas to the south Uxbridge border; to the west, the Toronto border; and to the east, the Whitby border. It's a great combination of urban and rural residents in north Pickering, including such hamlets as Brougham, Cherrywood, Claremont, Green River, Locust Hill, Greenwood, Whitevale and Altona; and of course the urban residents living in Pickering, west of Notion Road to Glenanna, and all of the town of Ajax.

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I recently had the honour of publicly congratulating our new Speaker of the House, the honourable member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, and his all-party Deputy Speakers, including the members for Essex, Hamilton Centre, Wellington–Halton Hills and Simcoe–Grey. Similarly, I'm personally taking this opportunity to thank my Premier for the opportunity to be here, his cabinet ministers and all Liberal caucus members for their welcome. I also wish to thank the opposition. To the Conservative and NDP members, I sincerely appreciate and thank you for your hospitality. Working together in a professional manner can only bring us the highest results and the needed changes in Ontario by this government.

The residents of Ajax have been extremely generous to me, electing me to two terms on the Catholic school board before regionalization, and seven terms on Ajax council, including one as regional councillor and deputy mayor. People have been very good to us, electing us in local elections 100% of the time.

After signing some 300 members and winning the provincial nomination in 1994, we lost our only election when Mr. Harris swept to provincial power in 1995. Two strong candidates shared the riding in that term. They were then-Minister Jim Flaherty and then-Minister Janet Ecker.

We have strong representation federally in our area now, with MP Mark Holland holding the identical boundary to me federally. With MP Dan McTeague to the west, we also have another people's champion. Until recently, the very popular Judi Longfield, a past MP to the east, served us well.

The potential of the opposition separating education was a concern at the door in the past election. However, both health care improvements and education upgrades, two of our strengths, were definitely also key elements. People acknowledge that the Premier's plan had assisted in elevating and improving health care and education. Both the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister of Education have been of great assistance in Durham region, particularly in Ajax and north Pickering. In their fields, both the Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities have provided us with additional strengths.

Today's challenges show the economy as a concern. Even with the numerous provincial incentives and tax cuts that we have implemented, and even though we have added some 400,000 jobs, manufacturing is impacted by the new global economy. As an example, my own company in Ajax has lost two printing orders in the last year—significant ones—one to China and one to India, so I understand. Add to that record high Canadian gas prices; the significant impact of the Canadian dollar, which costs us millions of dollars in manufacturing sales; and of course the slipping American economy, and we have our work cut out for us. In addition to the many positive Ontario incentives, we may have to tighten our belts and work a little harder.

The Dickson family is derived from Irish heritage, like the Hickey and Teehy families on my mother's side and the Kennedy name on our father's. We're a Roman Catholic family and the children of Mary Alice and Louis John Dickson, who devoted their lives to God and to their family. It was here that I had the opportunity to seriously look at the priesthood on two occasions as a youth. I have the distinction of being the oldest of 10 children who include, other than our baby Mary number one, who passed away after being baptized on her first day of life, Ellen, Ed, Margie, Judy, Christine, Mary, Paul and Veronica.

Interjection: You did well.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you.

It was here that we all learned a great lesson in life: We are all here to help one another as often as we can and wherever we can, not unlike our government. My immediate family is my wife, Donna, who has been by my side since we were married almost 43 years ago, and I proudly acknowledge her presence in the gallery today.

Our wonderful children are Jim, a successful Xerox of Canada manager, and Joanna, owner of Canadian Property Staging Co., presently doing the Juno Awards after several years at the Royal Canadian Air Farce. We love their spouses, Elaine and David, and our three beautiful granddaughters, ranging in age from two to five: Madeleine, Grace and Carys.

My wife, Donna, has been with me on all 11 election campaigns, particularly being my undefeated manager on all nine of my municipal campaigns. Donna's great-grandfather, William John Bragg, was the last Liberal provincial MPP from Bowmanville, which is east of Oshawa, over 70 years ago. We can change that next election.

The municipalities I represent are vibrant and unique in many ways. Both have special waterfronts: Petticoat Creek Conservation Area in Pickering and of course the Ajax waterfront, which I had the opportunity to chair for some 15 years, and which travels the full length of the municipality, from the Pickering border to the Whitby border.

Highway 407 reaches Brock Road in Pickering and needs expanding east to Highway 115 to help decrease gridlock in our two rapidly expanding municipalities and for the rest of Durham region as well. Our current mayors are Dave Ryan in Pickering and Steve Parish in Ajax. Some other excellent leaders of note whom I have worked with include Ajax mayor Bill McLean, current regional chair Roger Anderson and my regional chair, Gary Herrema.

Of course, my witty neighbour, Jim Witty, is the only person in Durham region to be both Ajax mayor and Durham regional chairman. My good friend and colleague MPP Wayne Arthurs is in the adjacent riding of Pickering-Scarborough East and was Pickering mayor for over 15 years. During all of this time frame and before, my wife Donna and I have filled several area Liberal Association president seats, in addition to being area coordinators for Durham region, both provincially and federally.

I'm in this Legislature today because of a strong elected Ajax riding association, hundreds of volunteers as well as many helpful donors. To them, once again, I say thank you. Without you, I would not be here. Our public service has stretched over 45 years, when I commenced the Ajax minor basketball association with friends like Jack Brown, Wayne Daniels and Ross Newitt.

People have been good enough to appoint us chair or president of over 40 non-profit and charitable associations over that time. Because of the dedicated people I have worked with, several recognitions have come our way—and I say, "our way." A few were the Queen Elizabeth 50th anniversary medal, Canada's 125th anniversary medal, the National Achievement Award for sponsorship of minor sports in 1986 and the Jaycees Outstanding Young Canadian Award in 1976.

To this day, my family and printing company annually sponsor over 22 youth and adult sports groups. We have been fortunate with this commitment to youth, which has

led to two provincial championships in hockey as well as a Canadian midjet lacrosse championship in 1986.

My business experience began when I was eight years old, learning to operate—and some of you may remember—something called a tabletop, hand-cranked Gestetner mimeograph machine. That's when my dad commenced the Ajax newspaper that still carries the name *The Ajax Advertiser*. It led me to start a part-time commercial printing business as a teenager. It opened my eyes to business, and particularly to fiscal responsibility. It also gave me the beginning of working longer and harder when my father sold his business, putting me in the unemployed ranks one day before my wedding. Fortunately, my wife still married me.

However, from a humble beginning, our printing company started to grow, and we expanded into the office products and office furniture business. One of our offshoot companies was Stationers Marketing of Canada, and that worked extremely well with my friends Jim Connors and Derrick Wagg. It was a marketing and purchasing company exclusively for our dealers, who were in 10 provinces and included some 54 different companies. It was sold in the early 1990s to the Canadian members.

My fiscal responsibility and experience has allowed me to bring in the only town of Ajax balanced budget in the last 10 years, with a zero percent tax increase. That was in 2000.

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There are many thousands of public green acres in Ajax—26,000 in total. However, if you don't have time to visit all of our parklands and open spaces, then try any of our beautiful golfing landscapes, from the small executive courses like Carruther's Creek and Riverside Golf to Durham region's most spectacular 54 holes at Deer Creek and fine golf clubs in Pickering such as Seaton, Cherry Downs, Four Seasons and, of course, Glen Cedars.

We all know our personal development dates back to our mothers and fathers. My father is an amazing 90-year-old man who resides on his own in Owen Sound and lost the right to compete in the Olympics for Canada because of World War II. My mother was born in Pickering township, raised in Pickering village until she married and lived her life in Ajax where Mom and Dad raised the Dickson family. Mom would have been 92 this year except that we lost her five years ago this coming August. With those two beautiful people uppermost in my mind, I say thank you to them. As I thank everyone in this Legislature for the opportunity to speak with you today, I say, "Thank you, Dad and Mother. This day is for you."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, as I stand here in such a historic place, I'd like to formally acknowledge and thank the voters of Hamilton Mountain for giving me the great honour of representing them here as their member of provincial Parliament.

I want to begin my remarks this afternoon by acknowledging my predecessor and good friend Dr. Marie Bountrogianni. Marie, whom I have known very well over the last few years, has always been a relentless champion not only for the constituents of Hamilton Mountain, but indeed for all Hamiltonians. In true Greek fashion, she has passed the torch, and I don't intend to drop it. Of course, I simply can't forget my colleague and fellow Hamilton MPP, our Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the Honourable Ted McMeekin. Thank you, Ted, for all of your support and guidance. I sincerely appreciate it. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not formally thank all of those people who supported and encouraged me during the course of the election and, in particular, my friends and my family.

My parents emigrated from Greece to Canada from two very small villages, my mom from Afisou, a small village close to Sparti, and my father, a village called Agios Nikolaas, which is at the tip of Greece. When they came to Canada in the 1960s, they dreamed of Canada as their new home of opportunity.

With your indulgence, I would like to share a short story with you on how I first became interested in politics. It was a cold fall evening. I was only eight years old, and my mom and dad were getting ready to go to the polling station. Like any typical eight-year-old who was not really interested in going anywhere with their parents, I threw a temper tantrum. Well, when my father stopped, turned around and said to me in his very loud and thick Greek accent, "No daughter of mine is not going to vote in an election," it was at that point I knew that if politics was important to him, it was going to be important to me, and after that I was hooked. I watched the political debates, and I found out everything I could about government, and I thank my parents for that inspiration.

There is an old Greek proverb that says, "A society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall never sit in." That is the very reason why I respect anyone who puts their name on a ballot and why I want to congratulate all the members who sit in this House, because the great majority of all of our hard work over the next four years will not be realized and fully appreciated for years to come. I believe that as the keepers of the public purse and stewards of the province we have the responsibility of doing what is right for Ontarians, not just for those who reside in our ridings. This government can be a force for good in our province. It can create opportunity, remove barriers and offer a helping hand to those less fortunate. What I do believe is that government has a duty to create the environment necessary for individuals and families to prosper.

Like many people, I know what it feels like to lose a job. It's devastating, not only financially but the loss of self-esteem. Being unemployed has taught me that I needed to make a difference in my own life. That is when I decided to become a small business owner. It was risky and it was scary, but I knew if I didn't try, I would always regret it. Nikos Kazantzakis, a 19th-century Greek

writer, said it best: "In order to succeed, we must first believe we can."

I stand here today and I tell you that I understand the challenges of small business but I also understand the passion and the enthusiasm and the excitement that entrepreneurs have. In fact, entrepreneurs are a vital component of our economy and will continue to play an increasingly large role within our province. Nearly one million people in Ontario describe themselves as a self-employed business owner, and I am very proud to be one of them.

Now let me tell you about the people of Hamilton Mountain and why I am so proud to represent them. This is a riding filled with hard-working, salt-of-the-earth people with strong family values and a lot of common sense. They have so much in common with my parents, who taught me a simple lesson: that if you work hard, you are destined to succeed. These men and women understand the value of education and health care. Just like them, I have to brag about Hamilton Mountain being home to world-class medical and post-secondary institutions like the Juravinski Cancer Centre and the Henderson Hospital.

The government is committed to excellence in both education and health care. It is the platform that Hamilton residents support. My constituents also see the importance of job creation, a healthy environment, child care, and the need to eradicate poverty and address the social issues facing the marginalized in our city and our province. All of these beliefs were reflected in the positive message that our Premier and party brought forward in the last election. Our government plans to provide excellence for all in education; deliver health care we need; build an economy that achieves our potential; grow strong communities; and create a government that works for and addresses the issues that matter to Ontarians.

Hamilton has many advantages. Among these is our skilled and well-educated labour force. We have the talent in place to make Hamilton one of the most competitive cities in North America. We have top researchers, business people, community leaders, health care professionals and educators. Hamilton is also a transportation hub. We have the third-largest port in the Great Lakes, we have the number one cargo airport in Canada and we have the road and rail infrastructure that reaches a market of 120 million customers within 800 kilometres. These are just some of the reasons why, in 2007, Hamilton smashed its records for total annual building permits to well over \$800 million.

I am certain that the next four years will be a lot of hard work and long hours and have their share of challenges. But like the Greek writer said, "In order to succeed, we must believe that we can."

It is, in closing, a real privilege to be here in the Legislature today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? The member for Ottawa-Nepean.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nepean-Carleton, but that's okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is wonderful to see a woman in the chair. I've not seen that since I've been here.

I want to address my two colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Ajax-Pickering. I just want to say how pleased we were in the official opposition to listen to your speeches. They were both incredible and they came with a lot of heart. What really warms my heart is that you talked about your family and the people who served in your community prior to you, whether they were a Liberal, a Conservative or a New Democrat. That is a really good sense of purpose to start out with, because you know where you're going and because you know where your community has been. So I congratulate my colleagues in doing that.

I remember my maiden speech here. It was two years ago, almost to the day, when my colleague Christine Elliott and I and our good friend Peter Tabuns were elected in by-elections. I was very nervous here. I was the youngest member, I was a woman and a Conservative, and it was a very exciting time for me.

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But what's exciting today, of course, is that I'm not a rookie any more. I might still be the youngest, but you guys are newer. That has a sense of empowerment all to itself. But I'm very pleased to be here. We do have a lot of new blood, particularly in our own caucus. I'm going to be very excited to listen our colleague from Sarnia-Lambton later today when he makes his maiden speech. He's just an incredible—incredible—addition to our caucus, as are Sylvia Jones and Randy Hillier and—I'm missing someone. Who else do we have that's new?

Interjection: Peter Shurman.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Peter Shurman. How could I forget? He's actually the most amazing man that we've got. He's from the Thornhill area, and we think that he's doing great.

In any event, as I wrap up the clock, I just wanted to again congratulate our colleagues from Hamilton Mountain and Ajax-Pickering on winning their elections. I wish them much success in the four years ahead.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to reiterate the comments. I must commend you both, the member for Ajax-Pickering and, of course, my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. Well done. It's a very nerve-racking thing to get up for the first time and speak in this House. It's overwhelming. I did it myself just before Christmas, and I must confess that I was extremely nervous. But once you've done it, it's like anything else: You get better at it. You two presented very well.

I guess the time wasn't quite there for Sophia to finish, but I'm sure that you'll be speaking a lot in this House in the future. You do a great job, and I must say, Sophia is very passionate about our community. We may be on different sides of the benches, but I'm sure she's got Hamilton's best interests at heart. We all want to work together for the people of Ontario.

The member for Ajax-Pickering: It's nice to know your history. We like to share that in these inaugural speeches. It's nice to know a little bit about the people. It's a little more intimate to know where they come from, their relatives and their history. All the people in this Legislature have a wonderful history. You don't come here unless you've done a few things right in your life. So I commend you all, and I wish you all the best in your future endeavours.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me congratulate you for being in the chair; you're doing a great job.

I am delighted to welcome my two new colleagues to the House and to have the opportunity to hear their maiden speeches. I could see they were nervous. I wasn't nervous when I did my maiden speech, because late one night the whip of the day said, "Lou, would you like to speak for about 10 minutes?" As a result, I wasn't prepared, and it was the best thing that I've ever done. So I didn't have to share the agony that you went through.

To my friend for Ajax-Pickering: That was my old neighbourhood. I kind of wish I was still living there, to have such a great MPP representing me today. So, to you and your wonderful wife, you're doing a great job. I know you're here for the right reason.

To Sophia, the member for Hamilton Mountain: I must say that she is really here for the right reasons and certainly shows it—the way most of us are here. What's interesting is that I can really relate to both these folks because they're both small business owners, as I've been for all of my life. But I must tell you, I haven't tasted Sophia's sauces yet. I am waiting for—

Interjection: We're all waiting.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We're all waiting. So that's a challenge for you, Sophia. We'll give you a thumbs up, I'm sure.

I know you're going to make a great addition to this government. Your heart is in the right place. You have the same beliefs that we all do. All I can say is that we look forward to working with you for the next four years.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment.

I certainly want to add my congratulations to the member for Ajax-Pickering, Joe Dickson, and the member for Hamilton Mountain, Sophia Aggelonitis.

This place can be far too partisan at times. At the time when someone makes their maiden speech, I think this is the real essence of why we're here in this Legislative Assembly. We know that there are a lot of things that get done here and there are a lot of games that get played. Part of it is theatre, and part of it is because we passionately see things in a different light. But we are all here for the very same reasons, and that is to represent in the very best way we know how the people who have honoured us by sending us here.

I was very interested—I was sitting in the members' gallery at the time, not too far from Joe's wife, Donna,

and listening to his history of community service. I was very impressed with that. Joe and I have had a chance to chat. Joe actually does some skidooing up in my riding, and as I told him, "Any time you come into Barry's Bay, you make sure you give me a call and we'll have lunch."

Hon. Jim Watson: Who's buying?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Certainly not me. Look, Joe is the guy who shows up in his printing truck; we know when he's on the job. I know that he's doing very well, and I'm glad to hear that, so I'm looking forward to a good meal from him.

I first had the chance to really sit down and chat with Sophia when we were doing some committee work up in Kingston. I think we do far too little of that, where we actually get together as a group in a non-partisan way to get to know one another a little bit, and we find just how similar and how very much alike we really are, in so many different ways. We have the responsibility of representing the party that we ran for and the people that we represent, but we don't see the world that differently in most cases. I think it's very important that we never forget to recognize that we're all here for the very same reasons, and I welcome these two fine members. I congratulate them on being elected by the people—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

I call on one of the members for a response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's a pleasure to stand on behalf of my friend and colleague from Hamilton Mountain, MPP Sophia. I'm waiting to taste some of that scrumptious cooking as well. She and I share the same family values. The family is perhaps the most important thing in our lives.

Hamilton has a great history. I would just like to add one or two little things that are part of the Ajax-Pickering history, and that is the strong ties to England.

The town of Ajax, of course, is named after the HMS Ajax. It was the HMS Ajax, the HMS Achilles and the HMS Exeter that sank the Graf Spee in the Second World War. All of our streets are now named after British sailors who were on the HMS Ajax, and that will overlap onto the other ships as well.

Many people may not know that during the Second World War, Pickering township land was bought by the government and had formed the largest single munitions series of factories in the entire British hemisphere. That enabled us, as one of the major features in winning the Second World War.

I'd like to just say that good things are happening in Ajax-Pickering. We're just celebrating the sod-turning of a major Ajax-Pickering hospital renovation, almost at \$100 million; that was by our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Our Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing came to Ajax some few weeks back to announce \$50 million for assisted housing in Ontario. And just recently, through the Ministry of Education, we have an announcement that the very school I went to, St. Bernadette's, is going to be rebuilt on the same site at a cost of \$9 million.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate? The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Before I ask him to begin his remarks, however, he has asked me to acknowledge that he's brought some people here: Michelle Gray, his constituency assistant, as well as Elizabeth Bailey, his spouse, are in the members' gallery to join in his inaugural speech. Let's welcome them. Welcome.

The floor is yours.

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Mr. Robert Bailey: Before I start my remarks, I'd like to initiate them by thanking all the members on all sides of the House for the warm welcome I have received since I came here. I enjoy the partisan part, but I also enjoy the after-hours with members of the opposition.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Following in the Lorne Henderson tradition.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah. I'll mention him later. But at this time I'd also like to congratulate the new members who gave their inaugural speeches today: the members from Ajax-Pickering and Hamilton Mountain. It was wonderful to hear the personal stories about how they got here and the things they did to get here.

Today, I'd like to begin my remarks by thanking, first of all, the voters of Sarnia–Lambton, who, on October 10, 2007, showed their faith in me by electing me as their new member of provincial Parliament. To be held to account by one's peers and not found wanting is indeed humbling. An opportunity to represent my constituents is truly a privilege that will always be one of the highlights of my life.

I would be remiss if I also did not pay tribute to my family, who are the real reason for any success I've achieved in life. The entire Bailey family—sons, daughters, siblings, nieces and nephews etc.—were involved in this endeavour, and there's a large family there. I must specifically, at this time, single out my wife, Elizabeth, who is here today in the gallery, who has been with me—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: She probably should be here instead of me. But anyway, she has been with me in any venture that we've accomplished in life. She has always had faith in my ability when I had doubts myself and has always been the major reason for any minor success on my part.

I am reminded of some wag who said, "Beside"—I don't say "behind"—"every successful man, there's a successful woman and a more surprised mother-in-law." I think that holds true in my case.

I must also pay tribute to my election team back in Sarnia–Lambton, who conducted a first-class campaign. Together, we took the issues to the voters, with the outcome being a significant majority on election day. It's an honour to serve as the member of provincial Parliament for Sarnia–Lambton, especially when I think about the past Progressive Conservative MPPs, Liberal MPPs and the NDP who have served parts of that riding as well. Specifically I'm speaking about the Honourable

Andy Brandt, former interim leader of our party, who was MPP from 1981 until 1990, and Marcel Beaubien and David Boushy, who served for parts of the riding in the 1990s. Going back a little further—I don't know whether even the honourable member from Mississippi Mills would remember Zeb James. He was here from 1945 to 1963. That might even predate him.

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Was he here when Queen Victoria was here?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes; he unveiled the statue.

Also the honourable member Bryan Cathcart, who represented Lambton West from 1945 to 1963. But of course, for 22 years, serving with Mr. Yakabuski's father from 1963 until 1985, Lambton county was represented—and I know a number of the members here remember him—by the Honourable Lorne Henderson, who was agriculture minister amongst a number of other portfolios. Lorne and these other members were all very important to the riding of Sarnia–Lambton and the province of Ontario.

Lorne himself was a giant of a man, both literally and figuratively, in Lambton county. His ability to remember people's names and deliver things for his constituents was legend. I hope, in some small way, that over the years I may be able to contribute in the same way.

While it's an honour to follow in the footsteps of these former MPPs, I am also aware and conscious of what a big job it will be. Since my election, no one has been more supportive of me than these former members, during the campaign and since. I want to pay particular tribute to the Henderson family. Lorne's widow, Rita, and their children are a constant force of encouragement and support to me.

In the time allotted to me, I would like to tell the House a little bit about the riding that it is my honour to represent. Sarnia–Lambton is comprised of the city of Sarnia and parts of Lambton county. The towns of Petrolia and Plympton-Wyoming, the police villages of Oil Springs and Point Edward, and the townships of Enniskillen and St. Clair, as well as the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, are contained there as well. The St. Clair River is our western boundary, and we are bordered on the north by the great Lake Huron.

The economy of Sarnia–Lambton is largely dependent on the petrochemical industry. Manufacturing, construction and agricultural sectors also add to its standard of living. My riding has the added feature of being on the route to the St. Lawrence Seaway, and it is also the location of one of the busiest international crossings, the Blue Water Bridge, which was recently twinned to accommodate trade now exceeding over \$2 billion a day. The area also has a Canadian national rail tunnel under the river, linking it with the United States and other world markets.

As you know, the North American petroleum industry started in my riding over 150 years ago. This summer, that first oil well's discovery will be celebrated in Oil Springs, Ontario. At this time, I'd like to personally in-

vite every member of provincial Parliament and the Speakers on all sides of the House to please come down to Oil Springs in the months of August and July. We're doing a number of different presentations. They're unveiling a stamp recognizing Oil Springs.

Without the petroleum industry, Sarnia-Lambton and Ontario wouldn't be what they are today. We still benefit greatly from the petroleum industry in Sarnia-Lambton. Shell Oil is currently studying the feasibility of constructing a major, 250,000-barrel-a-day refinery. This would be the first new refinery in Canada in many years. If it's built, it will be built in St. Clair township in the riding of Sarnia-Lambton.

With a construction project of this size, we need the province to be on board to help the company and the municipality, and to work with the federal government to make sure the infrastructure is in place to handle this new development. Mayor Steve Arnold and St. Clair township have approached the government and I know they're working with them today. I only hope that the government will work with them to put anything in place that needs to be done to make this project a reality, which will be of benefit to southwestern Ontario, Sarnia-Lambton and all of Ontario.

We all know that industry in Ontario is suffering right now. In Sarnia, we see the effects of the troubles in the manufacturing sector as much as anyone. Recently, Lanxess—formerly known as Polysar, one of Canada's oldest manufacturers of butyl rubber—announced they were closing one of their units and laying off over 270 people. For those of you who follow these things, the picture on the back of that \$10 bill from the 1970s and 1980s was a picture of the unit at Lanxess. In fact, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke tells me that the member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills actually has a number of these originally minted \$10 bills. He's very reluctant to spend them or even show them, but maybe if we prevail upon him, he might. So if you want to see that original unit, we can maybe prevail upon him.

Lanxess made this decision for two reasons. One, unfortunately, was the strength of the Canadian dollar, which none of us can do anything about; it's made us uncompetitive. But the second that the plant manager indicated to me was that energy costs in Ontario are at least 20% higher than energy costs in other jurisdictions like Europe. In fact, Lanxess is moving this production to France, where the cost of doing business, in their opinion, is much lower.

It's reasons like this that I believe the provincial government needs to act now to reduce the cost of doing business in this province. My leader, John Tory, and this party that I am proud to be a member of have offered a plan that would help our manufacturing sector. This plan includes reducing taxes on business and business investment, reducing taxes on small business, and seriously addressing the questions around the security and cost of our energy supply and transmission.

In my riding, like in many other sectors, energy supply and transmission is a big issue. It is even bigger in

Sarnia-Lambton than in other places because we have the Lambton generating station in St. Clair township. This generating station can generate up to 2,000 megawatts, at full capacity, of much-needed electricity. So when the government talks about closing coal-fired plants, they are also talking about throwing many of my constituents out of work, which I find unacceptable.

I understand that clean air is an important priority for all of us. But I understand that the technology exists, if this government would make it a priority, to reduce the emissions from these coal-fired plants. In a time when we are all talking about the need for more electricity and generation, and all the experts tell us we will always have a mix of electricity sources to keep and control costs, we should not be talking about taking generation off line. Instead, we need to be talking about ways to clean it up. We should also work with the federal government on this new method of carbon sequestration; there are examples of that in Weyburn, Saskatchewan right now. The geology in Sarnia-Lambton and that part of Ontario are well-served to handle that with our underground storage wells.

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If the province was serious about cleaning up air, it would make the expansion to four lanes from Indian Road in Sarnia-Lambton a reality. This Highway 402 expansion to four lanes to the Blue Water Bridge is a priority in my riding. Currently, as a result of security measures on the United States side of the border since 9/11 and at other border crossings, trucks are forced to idle for hours at a time on Highway 402 leading to the Blue Water Bridge, creating gridlock. Blue Water Bridge Canada and the community of Sarnia-Lambton are supporting a plan to expand the highway to four lanes westbound from Indian Road. This would enable us to take advantage of the NEXUS and FAST cards for pre-approved truck traffic and commercial traffic so that we could access the bridge. There would be vehicle traffic; it would be used as an expressway across the north part of the city, and we could also keep the tourist traffic moving.

The environmental assessment has been completed, and we are now only waiting for the go-ahead from the province. It's with the bureaucracy. The sooner we get approval, the sooner this work can begin. Every level of government recognizes the importance of this project, but it is provincial red tape and rules that are holding it up. This is important not just to my riding but to Lambton-Kent-Middlesex and all of Ontario, in fact. We've got two major border crossings in my area, one at Windsor and one at Sarnia-Lambton, so it's very important that we do this.

There was no bigger issue in the last election in Sarnia-Lambton than the construction of our new hospital.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, this is it. This hospital project had been on the books for many years, and for a number of reasons it was never completed. The city of

Sarnia has two hospital sites currently; both of them are old and outdated. They desperately needed to be replaced. I'm happy to say that one of my first jobs as a Member of Provincial Parliament-elect was to turn the sod for the construction of that new hospital.

Mr. John Yakabuski: One day, and you got it done.

Mr. Robert Bailey: A couple of days. I had to take the day off after the election, but by the Friday we were at it, shovels in the ground.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, I've got to admit, the minister was there. He and the Minister of Health helped.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, they were a lot of help to my election; they really were.

Anyway, the big issue with the construction project is the cost overruns and who will be responsible for paying them. Our community feels that they have raised more than their fair share, especially when you consider that any cost overruns seem to have been caused by the government delay as they changed the funding formula. I will work hard to ensure the province will live up to their responsibilities, as they have promised, on the hospital funding.

The community of Petrolia, where I am now a resident with my family, also has a hospital site. It's been in the community of Petrolia for over 100 years: Charlotte Eleanor Englehart Hospital.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Lorne Henderson was born in that hospital.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Lorne Henderson was born in that hospital, as I was. I'm a—Norm might have been there when they opened. No?

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: He was a midwife.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes.

This hospital is an important part of the provision of rural health care in Sarnia-Lambton. Recently we received word from the Ministry of Health that we could move ahead on the new cataract centre of excellence clinic. I was there the day that a large donation was made by the family of Roger Mailloux in memory of his late wife, and this clinic will be called the Pat Mailloux cataract clinic. The hospital still has a lot of work to do to raise money for the new equipment, but I know the hospital, with examples that have been set in the community, will help the foundation be successful in these fundraising efforts.

One of the interesting and perplexing aspects of health care in Sarnia-Lambton is the underserved designation of the city of Sarnia, yet Petrolia is not part of this. What's perplexing about this is, many residents in Sarnia who can't find a doctor there are taking the short drive to Petrolia and seeing all the new doctors who are residents of Petrolia. This is putting extra demand on the local doctors in Petrolia, making it impossible for local residents of Petrolia and area to find a doctor. I need to work, and I'd like the government to work with me and

the Ministry of Health, to take a look at how the underserved designation is worded and see if we can do something on the catchment area and change it where appropriate.

The riding of Sarnia-Lambton has a large manufacturing sector, a large tourism sector, but it also has a large and very important, vibrant agricultural sector. Shortly after my election, I met with a group of 500 livestock producers from Lambton county. At that meeting, I heard all about how the livestock sector is suffering from the high cost of input and the high dollar. While the government admittedly did put some money in before the end of the year, what we are finding out is that apparently more of these cheques are going to retired farmers than are going to new and current farmers. As a knowledgeable colleague of mine, the member for Oxford, pointed out the other day, how do you explain to a farmer that they aren't getting any money but yet a retired neighbour who got out of the hog industry two years ago is getting a cheque for upwards of \$80,000? I'd love to know how many of these cheques the government is now sending to sunny climes like the state of Florida.

In closing, I'm honoured to be a member of the Progressive Conservative caucus here at Queen's Park. Over the next four years our party, under the leadership of John Tory, will be working hard to make sure that this government is held to account.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I hear them all cheering. They're cheering for John right now.

On our side of the House, we believe that it's time for a government—

Interjection: We want John.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, we want John. I can hear it now. Madam Speaker—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Order, please. Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Robert Bailey: They're cheering me on. It makes me feel good; I'm part of the place.

On our side of the House we believe that it's time for a government that tells the truth, trusts the people and has the common decency to mean what it says, only promise what it can deliver and then to deliver on those promises. That's the kind of government I believe we need in Ontario. It's the kind of government that this caucus and I and my colleagues will be pushing for every day. Thank you very much for your solicitous listening today. I'm proud to be a member of this House with all the members.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I would just like to convey to my colleague Mr. Bailey that I must confess the first time I met him he was a very warm, outgoing person, and he was probably the second person I ever talked to in my orientation. I must say that he was cordial, friendly and we had a great dialogue. Unfortunately, the next day we were headed downstairs and he decided to take almost a

header down the stairs, and I had to spring into action. At least he didn't fall, and I was glad of that, because you know the NDP are there to help everybody.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's right.

Mr. John Yakabuski: So you're the guy we have to thank.

Mr. Paul Miller: That's right. I saved that man. Actually, I'd just like to convey—a very stormy speech. He got a good reaction from the government. There was a lot of humour in his speech, which is always good for the heart. I'm sure that Bob is going to fit in nicely. He presented well, and he didn't seem too nervous. He may have been a little nervous this morning when we were talking, but I think he came through quite nicely. I congratulate you and wish you all the best, sir.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me say you're doing a wonderful job in the Speaker's role today, and I know you'll be very successful throughout this Parliament.

I certainly want to welcome the member from Sarnia-Lambton to this great chamber. I know that he will do a wonderful job here. It's nice to hear some of the history of Sarnia-Lambton. There are other great members who came from that area. I think of the late Jim Bullbrook, who was mayor of Sarnia and a member of this place for many years. In fact, on a couple of occasions, the late Jim Bullbrook contemplated running for the leadership of the Ontario Liberal Party. He was one of those really distinguished members who did his work on a day-to-day basis. I know that the member here today will follow in the great Bullbrook tradition of looking after his constituency exceptionally well—that great work ethic that was established by Jim to represent Sarnia-Lambton and the great natural assets that the Sarnia area has to offer. We know that it's the chemical centre for Canada in many ways. The city of Sarnia is certainly noted for its innovation in that particular industry and the hard-working men and women who go to those jobs every day that contribute to Ontario's wealth and the wealth of the Sarnia-Lambton area.

I know the new member will be a very distinguished individual here who I know will contribute on a day-to-day basis with some new ideas. I know for him that leadership does matter, and we'll certainly be looking for that demonstration on a day-to-day basis as he goes forward in representing those citizens. I know we certainly welcome him here, and perhaps he'll get the opportunity to visit the riding of Peterborough in the not-too-distant future. We'd certainly like to welcome him there to show that member the great assets we have in the Peterborough area. But I know he will make his mark here in this Legislature. Certainly, on behalf of the government we welcome him here, and I will enjoy working with him over the next four years as we move Ontario forward together, which is the common interest for all of us in this Legislature.

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Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I really feel privileged to have the opportunity to speak in the two-minute rebuttal on behalf of my caucus because, quite frankly, all the members of the caucus here would like to stand up and welcome such an excellent MPP from Sarnia-Lambton.

I have had the privilege of serving with some of the predecessors that Bob Bailey talked about here in the Legislature, and I'm sure that Bob Bailey will bring the problems of Sarnia-Lambton to this Legislature, to ministers of the crown, and will be able to effect the same kind of positive results that people like Jim Bullbrook, Lorne Henderson, Andy Brandt and Caroline Di Cocco did before, and I include Dave Boushy as well. All of these members, I believe, were worthy members of the area. I think one of the things that Bob is going to have to learn is to change his speaking style just a mite in order to fit in with the Sarnia-Lambton tradition. That is when Lorne Henderson, all 300 pounds of him, used to rise in this Legislature, and particularly when he was the Minister of Agriculture, never spoke with his hands in his pockets like this, as Bob tends to do. He has one of his hands in his pocket. Lorne Henderson always talked with those very large hands. I think his hands were about 12 inches long, or whatever, but he always talked like this. He would always talk like this when he was talking to people. So, Bob, I think that's a hint you'll have to work on.

Otherwise, I think we are very fortunate in this caucus to have Bob in spite of the overall generally disappointing results of our party in this election. Bob is the one member who took one of the seats of the sitting government. We congratulate you especially on doing that, Bob.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments? Response from the member for Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank all my colleagues, especially the ones from Ajax-Pickering, Hamilton Mountain, the riding of Peterborough, and obviously Carleton-Mississippi Mills. I'd like to thank all of them for their kind comments, and Paul Miller. I shouldn't be naming people, I know—by their ridings. Anyway, it's a real privilege.

I remember something a fellow told me a long time ago, and I just thought of that. I should have mentioned it in my remarks. He said there are a lot more members who talk their way out of here than talk their way in, so I hope I'm not one of those. I hope I am able to serve the riding. It's a privilege—I really mean it—to be here. I think the province of Ontario has something like 13 million people, and 107 of us have the opportunity, the privilege, to serve in this august assembly. I sincerely mean it. I appreciate it. I appreciate the opportunity that the voters gave me. I hope I can do a good job, and I intend to visit a lot of these ridings. I'm feeling more at home all the time in here, and I'm looking forward to either—I'm not going to say "heckling," but adding to the debate, and if I get heckled back, that's fine, but I've

enjoyed it. I see kind of how the give and take works. It's certainly an honour.

Someone told me once about Jim Auld, who represented a riding down near Brockville, I think. I met him at the Honourable Lorne Henderson's one time. I said to someone, "What can you tell me about this fellow?" He said, "The best thing to say about the Honourable Jim Auld is that when you ask him what time it is, he builds you a watch." So I don't know; I don't think I'm at that stage yet. I don't think I can do that, not like some of the members who are in this chamber. I've had the great opportunity to watch a lot of them in action so far.

Anyway, it's been a pleasure. Thank you again, each and every one of you. And to my family and everyone who's here today, thank you again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Today I rise to address two issues: one, about racism in this province, and secondly, if I have the time, I want to talk about this government and its approach to climate change.

Last fall this government presented its speech from the throne. The Lieutenant Governor spoke the words of the government, set out its platform and set out its vision. In the course of that speech, the following statement was made: "Our people speak every language, embrace every culture, and have ties to every corner of the globe, but they share a common goal—to build a better life for themselves and their families, predicated on a belief in opportunity for all."

Actually, that's a true statement. That's a fair statement about this province. But it's not enough to make such statements if we want to have that kind of society. You can't just say, "This is the way it is"; you actually have to take steps to protect this society. To have a harmonious society, to have a society that functions well, that can provide everyone with the opportunity that we have, we have to ensure that racism is addressed, and it has to be defeated every time it raises its head.

To defeat racism, we here in this chamber have to make sure that people who come from every corner of the world know that the leaders in this province will speak out when racist statements erupt, when racism rears its ugly head.

This past weekend, I was contacted in my role as immigration and citizenship critic for the provincial NDP. The Community and Race Relations Committee from Peterborough brought to my attention a letter that had been sent by a Mr. Gordon Gilchrist, trustee with the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. This is a difficult issue to discuss. It's personally difficult for me and I think it's difficult for us as a society. He wrote a letter—and I have the letter—that was completely outrageous. This letter was published in the Port Hope Evening Guide and apparently in some other local papers. In his letter, Mr. Gilchrist made entirely racist remarks about immigrants, remarks that I will not repeat in this House and we should not have repeated in this society. Mr. Gilchrist slandered and stereotyped people

with a Jamaican, Indian, Lebanese, Tamil and Muslim background. He went across the board.

My roots are immigrant roots. I am very proud of those roots. I have to tell you that when I read this letter—and I think the reaction would be the same by any person in this House—I was so angry I could not think clearly. I know that for us to do our work, at times we have to distance ourselves emotionally so we can think through what can be done to correct this. How can this damage be repaired?

I have not often encountered such comments in print. I have not often encountered such comments from someone who has the responsibility of elected office in this country. There has been and there is an uproar about this letter in that community. He was denounced by many organizations in his area, including the Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough. I want to read some of the those comments into the record.

"It is inexcusable for Mr. Gilchrist—or anyone, for that matter—to write such racist views. I am asking for Mr. Gilchrist to be accountable for his actions and hand in his resignation immediately"—Ron Maguire, president, CUPE Local 5555, support workers of Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board.

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Next: "Simply put, Mr. Gilchrist must resign"—Dave Wing, president, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Kawartha Pine Ridge Elementary Teachers' local.

Or, "The letter written by Mr. Gilchrist to the Port Hope and Cobourg newspapers propagates extraordinarily prejudicial stereotypes of several different communities in Canada. These include negative comments about the Islamic religion, displaying a completely disheartening lack of knowledge and understanding of our faith"—Dr. Kenzu Abdella, Kawartha Muslim Religious Association.

Or, "It's extremely discouraging, but hardly surprising, that a person who could make the comments outlined in Mr. Gilchrist's letter to the editor would, when called to account, categorically deny that those comments were racist. Yet all of his letters could be used as examples of the dictionary definition of racism"—Lois Cromarty, barrister and solicitor, executive director, Northumberland Community Legal Centre.

Or, "There is nothing unclear about the racism of trustee Gilchrist's remarks. His February 12th letter is a catalogue of racially-based negative stereotypes and fear-mongering allegations"—Melinda Rees, executive director, Peterborough Community Legal Centre.

Or, "At issue for me and the OSSTF members I represent is a serious concern that Mr. Gilchrist's views regarding immigrants and Canada's immigration policy may have a negative impact on decisions he is charged with making that may harm the education of over 35,000 students that attend KPR schools"—Mark Silnicki, president, OSSTF district 14.

"Trustee Gilchrist's statements are racist. The anti-immigrant statements and racial stereotypes that are

flagrantly apparent in his letter are not to be tolerated. Given the seriousness of the situation, Gordon Gilchrist must resign, and the community at large would gladly accept his resignation"—Dr. Davina Bhandar, Community and Race Relations Committee of Peterborough.

I do find it difficult to think about what he had to say and the impact that this has on this community. I've been to this area—Kawartha Lakes, Peterborough, Cobourg, Port Hope. This is gorgeous country; Oak Ridges moraine country. There are great farms, friendly people, hard-working people, people whom I've met in all kinds of situations, whom I like a lot. This is a part of Ontario that we have to treasure. This is a part of Ontario with fabulous architecture. This is really a part of the heartland of this country.

In the heart of this beautiful country, amongst these really good people, we had Mr. Gilchrist making comments that have damaged his community's reputation and, I think, damaged the social fabric of this province.

Mr. Gilchrist wrote an apology. He called it an apology. He said his remarks were "interpreted" as racist. He said his remarks were "matters of citizenship and not those of racism." Well, Mr. Gilchrist, I don't know if you're watching and I don't know if someday you will read this transcript. But I want to say to you that unless you recognize that your remarks were in their very nature racist and not a question of interpretation, then you will not be able to apologize to people and you will not be able to make the amends that are necessary to be made.

It was interesting to me, reading his so-called apology, that all his comments about immigrants who were damaging this country were illustrated by remarks about non-European immigrants. He made no slanderous statements about American, Dutch or British immigrants. It was very clear in his letter which immigrants were the target of his anger, his distaste.

Racism, as defined in the Merriam-Webster dictionary, is (1) "a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race." That is a very dangerous ideology. Or (2) "racial prejudice or discrimination." We're dealing with a situation in which it is clear that Mr. Gilchrist assumes an inherent superiority on the part of long-time Canadians and makes clear in his letter the inherent weaknesses of the most newly-arriving immigrants from the non-European world. His remarks did not just make me angry; they made me weary. In a fundamental way, they made me tired.

We, in this room, have all known or seen division on the basis of ethnic background or religion. I grew up in Hamilton at a time in 1950s and 1960s when ethnic division and religious division were just an everyday part of life. Catholic kids fought Protestant kids and vice versa. I'm sick of that kind of division. I don't want to hear any more of that stuff in this world. I'm tired of it, and I think most people are tired of it.

Mr. Gilchrist, you have to act to heal this damage. You should not be in a position of authority on an elected

body in this province, and you should resign. Our society is made up of people from every corner of the world. The statement from the speech from the throne was right: The fact that people are gathered from around the globe in this place gives us an extraordinary opportunity. We have access to the talent and intelligence of some of the best in the world, all gathered here. It's a significant part of the reason this country is admired, respected, successful.

To make a society successful, to make it work, we have to be on guard against its being poisoned, against its being destabilized. It has to be nourished. It has to be kept in balance. It has to be strengthened. Attacks that incite racial division, that demoralize us, that pull us apart, damage the very fabric of our society.

Make no mistake: He has already damaged this community and caused division. Talk to the Peterborough Examiner, look at their letters-to-the-editor page, look at the comments that are being made: deep division. That's why we, here in this Legislature, cannot be silent on the matter. That's why I ask for his resignation.

Beyond my call, I believe that other members of this Legislature, in particular the Premier, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and the MPPs in the area we are discussing today, should be showing leadership and should be calling for action. We have to make it very clear that attacks on Canadians, on the basis set out by Mr. Gilchrist, cannot be acceptable.

My understanding is that the Premier and the ministers I have noted have been contacted by e-mail. It's my understanding that this matter will be before the district school board next Thursday, March 26, and that it will be considering a request from the local community to ask for his resignation. The district school board can't force him to resign. Electors hire us; electors fire us. No one can force him to resign, but he could resign, and the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board could make it very clear not only that they censure him—which they have done, to their credit—they need to go that next step and say, "We would be very happy to accept your resignation."

Although I am angry, although it takes a lot to be calm when dealing with this kind of stuff, in the end, not out of anger but out of a desire to prevent future damage, I ask that he resign, and that the leaders of the government of this province ask him to resign and do so immediately.

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Madam Speaker, I had not expected to speak so long on that issue, and it's very difficult to turn to other matters, but I want to say that in the course of looking that question, I realized that in part what is going on in our society and what will accelerate in our society as further stresses accumulate is unhappiness around difficulty in making a living, unhappiness about insecurity; economic insecurity feeds the kind of negative sentiment that we have seen. Last summer, as I said earlier when I had a chance in a two-minute commentary, the Premier had said that he promised to take action on climate change, and we haven't seen any of that. In fact, what we

have seen on occasion are repetitions of promises and simple statements that something will be done—that a guerrilla bureaucrat will be put in charge of making sure things happen.

I am not going to be using my time, but having talked about the other issue, I realize that nothing else really is appropriate. I've said what I have to say. I hope that the people of Kawartha Pine Ridge, the politicians who are in that area, will speak out. I hope that the people of that very beautiful community, very productive community and very valuable community find it in themselves to build the bridges necessary to heal this damage that was done, and I hope that Mr. Gilchrist will do the honourable thing and remove himself from that board of education.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Speaker, and I too want to add my congratulations on your new position.

I also want to take this time to congratulate the member from Sarnia—Lambton, the member from Ajax—Pickering and the member from Hamilton Mountain for your maiden speeches. You all did a very good job, and I'm very proud. It's an honour and a privilege to work with all of you in this wonderful institution, the Legislature.

One of the things I want to talk about—and I wanted to leave enough time to speak to the comments made by the member from Toronto—Danforth. I'm going to make one statement and then I'm going to add more comments. One of the statements that was made was from the throne speech, that it was right, and that statement spoke about Ontario working together, pulling together, diversity being our strength, opportunity and hope for all.

I, too, as the member from Huron—Bruce, have no tolerance for discrimination, but it's more than that. We must ensure that all of our children have the opportunities that we can provide, and that is, in my mind, the greatest strength that we can give the province of Ontario. But we also must always be cautious of the democratic freedom and the ability to speak and to act and to ensure that those freedoms always remain in place. I, too, as an elected official, think that this is one of our very important roles. But I don't want anyone to lose sight of the fact that when we lose that diversity, when we lose our sense of hope, our sense of opportunity, all of the province of Ontario falls and lags behind, because we are not as strong as when we stand together. That is when we have the strength for all Ontario and a celebration of our diversity is what makes us strong.

Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I would just like to add a couple of comments to the speech that we have just heard, and I think that it's very important in a democratic system that we always maintain those fundamental principles upon which our country and our institutions are founded. The question, then, of a judicial system—a system that finds people innocent until proven guilty; a system which

recognizes the rights and responsibilities of every individual; a system that provides for the kinds of freedoms and opportunities that, frankly, many people in the world today are literally dying for. I think it's one of the things that probably has prompted most of us to enter into public office, who've recognize the unique values that we have in this country and the necessity to always be prepared and always have the courage to provide leadership in supporting those institutions that we hold dear.

Mr. Paul Miller: First of all, I have to commend my associate from Toronto—Danforth. This is a very difficult thing to bring to this Legislature. It's a sad day in our province when elected officials act in this manner. Mr. Tabuns was actually shaking when he was speaking, he was that angry. That says that this is a passionate plea to our province. It also tells me that his heart is in the right place and that all our hearts should be in the right place when it comes to matters like this. It's unacceptable, it's disgusting, and it should be dealt with appropriately and quickly.

Further to his speech, which he touched on, the member from Toronto—Danforth is a former executive director of Greenpeace. I'm not supposed to mention names, and I won't, but this member has a history of caring about the environment, about people, and about the right direction this province should move in. I can't say enough about his compassion and his commitment to those areas, and I'm honoured to serve in this House with him.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's great to have an opportunity to make some comments on the speech from the member from Toronto—Danforth. It's very seldom that we agree on even parts of our thinking in this House, but it's got to be history that I totally agree 200% with his comments.

Mr. Gilchrist happens to live in my riding, being an elected official for the school board within my riding, and that school board is shared with the good members from Peterborough, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and Durham. So we have had a lot of occasions to meet with the school board and this particular gentleman. And it is a sad day. We're all immigrants. I just have no idea. I'm sorry if I missed it, but I'm not sure whether you had the opportunity to mention that at one time he was a federal member of government, representing a riding in Scarborough, here in Toronto. His family has a long history of parliamentarians; one of them even sat in this House for a time. So I tell you, I couldn't agree with you more, Mr. Tabuns.

The community is outraged. There are letters to the editors. Yes, he does have some letters of support—very few.

I want to congratulate the chair of the school board, Diane Lloyd, who censured Mr. Gilchrist. And you know what he did? The whole board voted unanimously to support it, and he voted against it. He even had the audacity to vote on something that's trying to put him in his place. He voted in support of what he did.

So this is a really, really sad day when we talk about—we are the envy of the world; 200 different ethnic communities living under one roof in this great province of Ontario, and we have to put up with this. So, Mr. Tabuns, congratulations on bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Response?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's gratifying to have the support from my colleagues in the House. I've had an opportunity in my short career in this Legislature to talk to many of you and hear you speak on the floor, and I know that the sentiment in this House is not one that supports the comments that were in that letter. That's very clear. As the member from Northumberland—Quinte West has said, "Ultimately, we are all immigrants," and to dishonour the latest wave of immigrants is to dishonour us all.

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The reality is that when you look around the world—when you look at the former Yugoslavia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and how quickly ethnic hatred came to the surface amongst communities that had lived together for centuries, when you look at what happened in Kenya in the last 12 months and the ethnic conflict between people who had lived side by side for generations, and when you look at Rwanda and how that ethnic hatred led to mass slaughter, there is no question that racism, ethnic division, is a very dangerous beast. At every opportunity that it rears its head, it has to be hit back. The message that needs to go out to those who have seen this debate here is that we in this House don't accept that kind of behaviour. We condemn it. We know what it leads to, has led to in other communities. We don't want that here; we absolutely don't want it here. We want that message to be carried back to that school board to make sure that there is no question, no hesitation, not even the slightest bit of doubt that that approach in behaviour is unacceptable in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to stand today and speak for a few moments about the speech from the throne. As I got ready to talk about it today, I wanted to pull it out again to remind myself what words were in this speech: "Moving Forward the Ontario Way." What I thought I would share with those in the House and perhaps those watching at home and my constituents is, take what these words on the paper say, lift them up and bring them to life by example in my own community.

One of the topics in this speech is education, talking about how the Ontario way, as the last speaker has said, is bringing our kids together to learn together, grow together, prosper together, and to have our education system be a place in our community where community comes together. Over the past number of months, as we have had the privilege to spend time in our home communities finding out what matters—finding out, for me, what matters to the people in Etobicoke—Lakeshore—I've had a chance to visit a lot of places in

my community where education truly is bringing people together. I've had a chance to visit the Islington Junior Middle School, where I saw first-hand the mosaic that is our public education system, with kids coming to school from all corners of the earth, from all corners of the globe, joining together in what is a wonderful community school. I saw those students form a student government, meeting the members of their cabinet and their prime minister, who are now leaders within that school, and finding out from them what is success. I heard about their challenges as they come from many families, old and new to Canada, and bringing those opportunities and experiences together in that school.

I had a chance during literacy week to go to the family literacy and parenting centre in that very school and talk to parents of young children, like myself, caregivers who emphasized the importance for them, in their daily lives, of what our government is doing to assist those families to learn how to be good parents, learn how to teach their kids to love reading, and to see that first-hand. I saw the affection and love provided by the caregivers and the teachers in that parenting and learning centre who are helping moms right across the province, in every one of our communities—and this is the one in my community—really understand how we can work with our young children to set them on that journey of lifelong learning.

I want to share with you, Madam Speaker, that after attending that event and meeting some of the parents, one of the parents sent me an e-mail. She talked about how she watches the news and sees one of our local stations talking about, "My Toronto is ..." She said, "My Toronto is the cultural mosaic that exists at the Islington Junior Middle School and the love and affection and the teaching, caring and compassion that is exhibited by those who work in this learning and parenting centre." I know for myself that it is so critical that we, as parents, are reminded how to teach and have our kids learn and to see first-hand what the teachers and caregivers and early childhood experts in those schools are doing to set all of our kids off on the right foot.

Recently it was March break, and kids all across the community were looking for things to do. I had an opportunity to go into Park Lawn Junior and Middle School and the James S. Bell Junior Middle School and see in action those community schools, which are hubs of activity for our families across the city, and to see students write about—I asked them, "Draw me a picture of some of your favourite places in our community." A number of the students at those events drew me a picture of their school because, for them, school is where they go to learn, for companionship, mentorship, guidance and for feeling included.

School is truly, for them, what defines "community" at that age. Isn't that a wonderful thing—to know that our government values education to such an extent that it was a significant piece in the throne speech and that one of the phrases that was used was, "A true test of this

generation's leadership will be the next generation's success."

Madam Speaker, I know that you, too, are a mother. There is nothing more significant to each individual parent than ensuring that their child succeeds. But if we step back from that, it is also our collective responsibility to make sure that the next generation succeeds. We all know that bringing early education, phasing the full-day training of four- and five-year-olds, will open up that world of learning to our students in a way that will open up opportunities for them, it will make public education be the best it can be, and it will move our province forward in the way that Ontario has always done: by putting education first, bringing groups of diverse communities together and having them live, grow and learn together.

I also want to talk for a moment about what has also been contained in the throne speech by way of tackling poverty—this critical issue. It was International Women's Day during our break from this place, while we were out in our constituencies. Each year, my federal colleague and I—it is now Michael Ignatieff; before, it was the Honourable Jean Augustine—have a day where we celebrate women in our community.

The theme this year was, "Strong women, strong world." It gave us an opportunity to talk about some really incredible women, bring some really incredible women forward and highlight how true that phrase is: "Strong women, strong world." We know that when we help mothers be stronger economically, that will help their children. We know that when we support women, they will raise their families and support their families.

We now have an incredible champion within our government in the Honourable Deb Matthews, who will be leading the charge on a poverty agenda, but let us and those at home and around the province know that Deb Matthews is not going to do this alone. She has the support of our entire cabinet and caucus behind her because we know that that is going to be the way we will move forward the Ontario way: It is by moving forward together.

We only need to look back generations from behind and in the past. I know that when I stood in this House some four years ago and gave what was my maiden speech, I talked about my grandmother, probably one of the strongest women that I have ever known. The fact that she, within one generation, was able to move her family from poverty, from some very challenging times, and have some of those 10 children be in the classroom, be in the boardroom, be in the courtroom, be in the Legislature here in Ontario—as one of my uncles was—be in the operating room, be engineers, doctors and lawyers, demonstrates how important the support of community was, and how important setting students on the right track and having them understand the importance of education.

1750

As I talk about my grandmother, I often say if you have 10 kids, they can be a lot of things. I hope that my

boys are as successful and prosperous, but I do want folks at home and in the House to know I'm not planning on having eight more kids.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Do you still have those Leafs shirts?

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I do have the Leafs shirts, I say to my colleague who gave my boys wonderful Leafs shirts, and I certainly hope that some day our Toronto Maple Leafs will do well, that we'll be able to have a big celebration with those Leafs shirts. I do think I might have a little bit of a hockey player on my hands. Zachary is a very good shot at two and a half, I have to say. He's very good with that hockey stick and connects every single time.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Give Cliff Fletcher a call. Cliff Fletcher's looking for talent, so give him a call.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Okay, we're looking to the years ahead; we're getting ready.

I've just been passed a note. I was about to move to the topic of seniors, and maybe this note is quite relevant to that topic. I don't want to offend my friends across the House, but I understand there are those of us who have been here longer, and today Bob Runciman is celebrating his 27th anniversary as an MPP. That might be a nice segue—

Applause.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I don't want to offend the member opposite, but it is a good segue into the topic of how valuable seniors and those of an older generation are in the province—keeping on working, doing such great work here in the province.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: Oh, he's been here since he was a baby.

On a serious note, let me tell my friends in the House about some of the work that the incredible seniors' organizations within my community are undertaking. We recently had a seniors' fair at the Franklin Horner Community Centre; Etobicoke Services for Seniors has had a number of celebrations; Storefront Humber. We have a community of incredibly active seniors, and I really want to thank them for the work that they do every day to make sure that the values and views of our government and the desires that we have for seniors to live healthy, long lives, to live in their own homes, to be able to be well taken care of and to have an opportunity to live with dignity—it is those groups that execute upon that vision in our community every single day, and without them, without our health care providers such as the LAMP Community Health Centre, which was here yesterday as community health centres joined us at the Legislature, we would not have seniors who could live with dignity and be caregivers and prosper.

I want to just turn, with a couple of minutes remaining, to the last thing that I wanted to highlight, and that was the economy. Certainly, we have a lot of celebrations to make with respect to success stories. I want to highlight that this week we had the Etobicoke Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Board of Trade, Business Excellence Awards. What we do in Etobicoke

is—just as folks in Etobicoke are like our government, we're very clear-eyed about the challenges that are going to be posed by the high dollar, by the high commodity prices, by competition. But we're very optimistic about what our community businesses will undertake and do and continue to make sure that the province prospers. We are there side by side with them, encouraging them, making sure that we relentlessly innovate with them, because we know how important the economy is to ensuring that we have good jobs, a good education system and a good health care system.

With those three key elements that have come out of the speech from the throne, I certainly say that I am very pleased to stand and make remarks in support of the speech from the throne. I do think we are moving forward together in a way that is the Ontario way, and that is what all of our communities need and want. That's how we'll make sure that we will have a community that prospers for many years to come and that our generation will be leaving the next generation on a very solid footing.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Questions and comments?

Any further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I rise today to support the throne speech. It's an ambitious plan and it is a plan that will keep our economy strong.

Over the next four years, our government is committed to move Ontario forward by investing in people, in communities and in businesses, for a smarter, healthier, greener and prosperous Ontario.

On October 10, 2007, constituents of my riding, Mississauga–Brampton South, and Ontarians gave a loud and clear message that they want a public health system that treats everyone equally, irrespective of income and status, whether you are a first-generation, second-generation or third-generation Canadian.

Our government is committed to a publicly funded education system where children can come together, grow together and learn together. Finally, we want everyone to be at his or her best so that we can dream together, work together and build together for a strong and prosperous Ontario and a stronger Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Thank you.

On December 3, 2007, Ms. Pendergast moved, seconded by Mr. Ramsay, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the

gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

On December 4, 2007, Mr. Runciman moved that the motion for an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

"However, the current speech from the throne fails to adequately address the state of our economy, which is the single most important issue facing Ontario today; and

"Whereas, since the beginning of 2005, Ontario has lost more than 153,000 manufacturing jobs; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to recognize that economic growth predictions for the province have shrunk by a full percentage point from predictions used by the government less than a year ago; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to indicate any sense of urgency for dealing with the economic challenges facing Ontario; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to provide a plan for dealing with this new economic reality by maintaining a program of unreasonable taxation and undisciplined spending; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to set out a plan to reduce taxes and reduce regulations that are killing business in Ontario and placing such hardships on Ontario's families;

"We therefore regret to inform His Honour that the current Liberal government is ignoring the very real economic problems facing Ontario and has failed to ensure our economic fundamentals are sound and, in so failing, is failing to live up to the responsibilities placed on it by the people of Ontario."

The first question to be decided is Mr. Runciman's amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those against, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There is to be a 30-minute bell.

I've received a deferral slip. The vote is accordingly deferred until tomorrow—I'm sorry; I have to read the deferral slip itself.

Date: March 19, 2008.

"To the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request the vote on the motion by Mr. Runciman on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be deferred until Thursday, March 20, 2008."

It's signed by the chief government whip, Mr. Colle.

The vote is accordingly deferred until tomorrow, March 20, 2008, during deferred votes on the agenda.

Vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The House is adjourned.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 March 2008

Jeudi 20 mars 2008

Speaker
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Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 mars 2008

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY REPORTING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE DEVOIR DE SIGNALER LES CAS DE PORNOGRAPHIE JUVÉNILE

Ms. Broten moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to protect Ontario's children / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfance et à la famille afin de protéger les enfants de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Broten, you have up to 10 minutes for your presentation.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to bring this important issue to the floor of the Legislature for debate this morning. Ask any parent and they will tell you that there is nothing more important than the protection of their children. This bill recognizes our collective responsibility as legislators to protect and prevent any further harm and be a strong voice for those children whose voices are often silenced. If this bill is passed, it would require all Ontarians to report images of child abuse and sexual exploitation. We all share a collective responsibility when it comes to the safety and protection of our children. Child pornography is a permanent evidentiary record of child abuse. This bill would make it mandatory to report that image, and the failure to do so would now be an offence.

If you saw a child being abused on the street, or you suspected abuse in their home or in your neighbourhood, you would have an obligation to report that information. If this bill passes, if you see a child being abused, but that image comes to you through a computer screen, you still have an obligation to report it because the abuse that that child is suffering, whether on the street or through the computer screen to you, is no less real, no less harmful, no less tragic. It is all of those things because it is an image of child abuse, clear and simple. There is no form

of child pornography that is not, in and of itself, illegal to hold, illegal to trade and absolutely a crime to commit.

It is evidence of a crime that is coming to you. If you receive that information, you need to report it. You need to report it to allow those who work every single day across our province, across the country and around the world, to protect children. Police enforcement agencies take that information and seek to find out if the child who is in that image is currently being abused and whether they can help protect that child. They take that information to find out whether the consumer, the individual who possesses that child pornography, has any children in their life who may be at harm and may need that protection.

The mandatory obligation to report that would be imposed takes away any confusion and leaves no question. Whether you are a computer repair technician or someone who runs a network in a business, whether you are a neighbour or babysitter or someone who is using someone's home computer, it is not your job to determine whether that image is or is not child pornography, whether that image is or is not illegal or what to do with that information. It will simply be your job, as a result of this bill, if it passes, to report that information to those agencies, be it law enforcement or child protection or any other agency such as CyberTip.ca, who may be able to make sure that that child is protected, and take that information and help and protect other children around the world.

I want to take a minute to acknowledge those who work in this most difficult area each and every day across our province and across the country. The voices of children are often voices that are very quiet and difficult to hear. There are people right across the province and around the country who lift those voices out of obscurity every single day. Many of those agencies and individuals have worked for so many years. They are the witness to very horrific images, and they act on all our behalf. I have been so pleased to have the support of many of those groups and individuals, and that support has culminated in the development of this bill and in bringing it forward.

I want to acknowledge some of them now. In the gallery today is someone who, for those who have worked in the field for a long time, almost needs no introduction: Paul Gillespie. Paul is president of the Kids Internet Safety Alliance, and a former Toronto police officer who has done more work and seen more horrific images than anyone can ever imagine. Paul's passion for this area continues as president of KINSA, and I'm so

very pleased that he has joined us here today. Paul will tell us that in the fight against Internet child sexual exploitation, the mandatory reporting of these images is an important step forward, because it gives police enforcement and child protection agencies the information they need to take more steps to protect more kids.

I also want to acknowledge the good work that has been done by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection. The executive director, Lianna McDonald, has been incredibly supportive of this proposed legislation and in helping bring it to fruition. The Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness in Ontario—John Muise is the director of public safety for that organization, and Ellen Campbell is their president.

Beyond Borders has also been supportive. Beyond Borders works around the world to protect children from child sexual exploitation. The Gatehouse child abuse advocacy agency is one which is close to my heart and that I've had the privilege to work with over many, many years. At the Gatehouse, they see the lifelong harm that is caused to children when they are the subject of this horrific abuse.

The OPP and the Toronto Police Service, who are on the front lines of this work and who are frankly leading the charge around the world, have also been very, very supportive of this—what I believe to be a very important step—and I appreciate the work they do every day and want thank them for their support and comments as well.

1010

Why do we need a bill such as this? It's because, essentially, this is a horrific crime which is out of control on the Internet right now. Pick up any newspaper, watch any news broadcast, and almost each and every day, someone is charged with or convicted of a child pornography offence. In each and every one of those cases, there is a child who has been harmed, a child whose life may be at risk and who will suffer lifelong as a result of that crime.

The Internet has opened so many doors for us. It's given us access to information instantaneously, and it's a wonderful, wonderful tool. But with each development in society, we know that there are very, very dark corners. This bill says that if you happen upon one of those dark corners, where you find and witness a crime being perpetrated against a child, you cannot stand by. We cannot have a society of bystanders, where we all turn a blind eye. We know, each of us, as parents and grandparents and people with children in our lives, that we would do anything to protect our own children. We need to make sure we recognize that we need to act collectively when it comes to this virtual community on the Internet. You don't need to go looking for it; we're not telling anyone to undertake vigilante justice and go about searching to find out what their neighbours or whoever might be doing. But the point is that if you unfortunately happen upon it, this bill would say that you must report it, because that's how we can best protect children.

C'est si important que l'ensemble d'une communauté travaille ensemble, essaie de protéger les enfants en-

semble, et de donner un signalement obligatoire. C'est quelque chose qui va aider ceux qui travaillent pour protéger nos enfants chaque jour. Ils vont avoir l'information dont ils ont besoin pour pouvoir en effet mettre en vérité le fait que les enfants sont la plus importante domaine de notre futur.

With that, I certainly ask my friends across the House to support Bill 37 and stand with me when we vote later this morning. Then we will all be able to collectively say that on this day, on what is the first day of spring, we stood tall in the Legislature and took a step forward to help kids across Ontario and around the world, to protect them from harm and abuse, because those kids matter to us. We are going to signal that today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to congratulate my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore in giving a very passionate appeal to this Legislature for the protection of children, our greatest natural resource in this province. I'd also like to welcome Paul Gillespie and Lianna McDonald and thank them for the work they are doing for child protection in this province. There is no greater role for any of us in this Legislature and in this province than protecting those children who cannot protect themselves. That is why I will be supporting this piece of legislation. It's much-needed legislation, and I think that all three political parties in this chamber will support the honourable member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

I want to start today by saying that not only as a mother and a child advocate, but also as an MPP, I have been able to work on matters of child protection. This past winter, when I was in my own constituency of Nepean–Carleton, I got to meet with two survivors of child sexual abuse. They created something called the Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Network, which will be launching later this spring, in April. These two people have been so courageous to talk about their experiences and how they want to prevent future sexual abuse of children. They are Kimothy Walker, who is a CTV News anchor in Ottawa—I have so much admiration for her and her ability to speak out about this issue—and Ron Jette.

The picture they painted for me in my office of what is happening to children across this province and across this country was mind-boggling. It was scary, and as a mother I was terrified. That's why I don't think Bill 37 could have come at a quicker time for me to be able to support something that I think is long overdue and much needed in this province. So I congratulate Kimothy Walker and Ron Jette for recognizing the need. Hopefully we'll all be able to work together on this legislation.

I think this is a step in the right direction. I've long been an advocate of a children's bill of rights for the province of Ontario, and I hope to table a piece of legislation this year on more protections for children. Every piece of legislation we look at, particularly when it comes to social services, Attorney General matters or justice issues, should be measured against the rights of

children and how we can best protect them. That is what I intend to do and I think that's what the honourable member here has intended to do, and I congratulate her for that.

I wish to speak briefly about some of the challenges of this legislation. Perhaps during the wrap-up the member can communicate some of my concerns and see if she is able to answer them.

One of the biggest issues is, how are we going to enforce the piece of legislation? It is much needed, and right now we do not have enough police officers to not only enforce the law with those doing the bad deeds, but also to enforce the law with the folks who should be reporting these atrocities. So I would welcome an answer to that.

The second thing—and I wish that the Attorney General was here, because, quite honestly, the penalties for people who are abusing our children are not stiff enough. I think that we ought to be having that conversation, that discussion and that debate right here in this chamber. I would welcome her views on that matter.

The third is, how do we assist the police, who are already doing an amazing job? As my colleague pointed out, the OPP are world leaders. How do we give them the resources so we can make sure that as many children as we can protect in this province are protected?

Those are some of the concerns I have. I wish to again acknowledge some of the great work that people are doing in terms of child protection in this province. I urge every single member in this Legislature to speak out on this, not only today in this chamber but when we go into our communities. We should be using every tool we've got to let people know that what some sick individuals are doing in this province is unacceptable. They should be challenged and they should be in jail.

As a mother, I want to again congratulate my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. This is a great piece of legislation. I offer you my full support and I wish you well today.

Mr. Mike Colle: I also want to personally thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for really being brave enough and courageous enough to take on this very difficult subject, because it's certainly subject matter that most of us want to try to avoid because it is so disgusting. But the harsh reality is that this kind of insane, criminal behaviour does take place in our society. It takes place internationally through the Internet. I commend the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for leading us into a more preventive activity here, because I think Bill 37 will be a deterrent. I think it will prevent some of these horrific things from happening. It will send a strong message out to these criminals that this kind of behaviour is not tolerated in the province of Ontario or anywhere in Canada. So I think it's going to have a great deterrent and preventive effect, and I really commend her, as I said, for putting this very thoughtful piece of legislation forward.

It is essentially based on the same model that we have in Ontario in terms of reporting incidents of abuse to the children's aid society. If we see or know of something

taking place in our community where a child is being mistreated, we have an obligation to report that. I think this is the same approach here, because the wide scope of the Internet is so pervasive that it is the new reality of what is going on in our community, through the Internet. Therefore, we need to join with the police and join with advocacy agencies who need the support of the public in counteracting this criminal behaviour.

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I see this proposed legislation as a way of partnering with these excellent agencies and our dedicated members of the police services who are, on a 24/7 basis, trying to deal with this scourge. It is an added benefit, I think, as the police have said, to have the public acting, in some ways—this is another dimension of what we have in all our communities: the Neighbourhood Watch program. It is almost like an Internet watch program. We are our brothers' keepers; we are our children's keepers. All of us who are parents of children or grandparents of children know first-hand how precious they are. We don't have to expand on that, but I think all of society has an obligation to protect children.

This legislation in essence empowers all of us to be more conscious of the responsibility we have to be our children's keepers. Because in many cases parents are overwhelmed with day-to-day work, with pressures, they need our help to protect children. Sometimes the incredible amount of money that is made on the Internet by selling the product of crime—it is so lucrative that these criminals will use any means possible to promulgate this kind of pornography on the Internet. Those of us who use the Internet know full well that you get bombarded by this junk 24/7, the spamming. It's just non-stop, because there are, I'm sure, hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars to be made in this criminal industry.

So I applaud, again, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for taking this leadership step in enhancing our ability not only as a government but as a community to better protect and watch out for our precious children no matter where they live and no matter whose children they are. We will all be stronger as a community if we have this social consciousness of trying to ensure that our children are in no way brought into this incredible world and we will protect them any way we can. This is our chance to pitch in here and protect children. So again, this is a very thoughtful and much-needed piece of legislation and I fully support it.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to take this opportunity to support the honourable member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore on this bill to protect Ontario's children. This bill proposes the mandatory reporting of child pornography. It is a bill that will amend the Child and Family Services Act to protect Ontario's children. While I don't have children of my own, I have many nieces and nephews and a goddaughter. But I do believe that it is the responsibility of all Ontarians to protect the children who live in this province, and it is a very important bill.

I have spoken to a number of my constituents and there is overwhelming support for this bill. Some of the

comments that I have received include, "It's our responsibility to protect not only the children of Hamilton Mountain but all across our great province. Why haven't we done this before?" Another comment was, "We as a society must take action. Being a bystander is not right. Let's all take responsibility." The third comment was, "This issue affects all of us. It's easy enough to think someone else will make the call, but what happens if you don't?"

I would also like to just comment on some of the experts and what they have had to say. A quote from Rosalind Prober, president of Beyond Borders Inc.: "When it comes to the rights of children to be free from sexual exploitation and abuse, this bill makes it clear that everyone has the obligation to report, to help find children, rescue them and prevent years of future abuse."

Then we hear from Ellen Campbell, the president of the Canadian Centre for Abuse Awareness: "These are images of child abuse, plain and simple. This legislation will protect children by clarifying the duty to report."

Finally, I have a quote from Andy Stewart of the child pornography section with the Ontario Provincial Police. He says: "We deal with disturbing images of child sexual abuse and exploitation daily. The public needs to understand the severity of the abuse in these images and that reporting can facilitate protection, child rescues and prevent re-victimization. The most fundamental responsibility of any society is to protect its children."

I fully support all of these statements. I am in full support of this bill, and I applaud the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for the work that she's done. I congratulate her.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to speak in favour of this bill. I want that to be said at the outset, because I do have some criticisms and I think some things need to be looked at, but in the overall scheme of it, I think this is a bill that ought to go forward. It ought to pass here today in the Legislature and ought to be sent to committee.

This is a very serious matter. It is serious to all people of this province, all people of this great country, probably all people of the world. It is horrific that one can find images on the Internet and elsewhere of children being abused.

There was a time, many years ago, when I was a councillor in the megacity of Toronto, that I was the city of Toronto's representative on the child abuse committee of Ontario. We met about once a month in an office on Yonge Street. We helped to raise funds for the victims of child abuse, and we helped to fashion programs for those people who were abusers. It was a very sobering experience for me to witness the families, the children, even the abusers—to see the depths to which people were driven, the sadness that ensued, the children who had to have their lives turned around. All of that was very sobering.

I think, with all my heart, that we need to do something. I know what this bill purports to do is to try to look at ways of stopping the abuse that is coming across the Internet—primarily, but not exclusively—and the ways

that we can do it. I think that's where some of the difficulty I have is. I am sure that this bill will pass here today. I don't think there's anyone in this room who does not understand the magnitude and want to try, even a little, to do something.

But in my own heart of hearts, I have to question the deterrence value of this. I question this because people look at the Internet, and people will look at these disgusting pictures and other things, usually in the privacy of their own homes, in a secluded area. They will not be out there watching in a place where they can be seen. They will be doing it where they're alone and when they're in private and where they're not likely to be caught.

I wonder about the deterrence effect, because every day, sadly, when you see that there's been a shooting in Toronto, as an example, and you see that it was in a crowded nightclub or in a room filled with people and the police arrive 15 or 20 minutes later, look around the room and say: "This gentleman has been shot in front of all of your eyes. Who saw something? Did anybody see anything?"—sadly, you know all too often, and the police know all too often, and we all know, that even though it may have been witnessed by dozens of people, no one is willing to come forward—even though they were there and they can be proved to be there. There is no deterrence. Those people do not go to jail; they cannot even be charged.

So, sadly, I'm looking at this bill and I'm wondering how many people will actually be brought forward? How will they be caught? How will they be made to testify? How will they do the right thing? I don't know. I think the mere fact that we are asking them to do so is a good idea, and that's why I support the bill. But how anyone could ever be charged or forced to give this kind of information I find difficult.

1030

I think we have to look as a society, with this brand new legislation—and the member spoke eloquently about the dark corners of technology—at who is responsible for putting these websites up, and what responsibility do the companies that allow it to be put up have, the search engines? People go on these websites; they're traded by word of mouth. You can log on to one and find another, and so on and so on; you can keep going. Surely the companies that allow this stuff into the websites have a responsibility.

In my view, what we need to do is start enforcing that. In the same way we can stop magazines, the same way we can stop newspapers and have proved we can do that with libellous or slanderous material or with pornography in the past, we should start to think about doing this in a full-scale way against the search engine companies. They should be shut down if they permit it. As soon as they become aware that this information is going through their search engine so that people can access it, they should be in the forefront of shutting it down. That's where I believe legislation needs to go.

I've been accused in the past of wanting to be someone who is looking to stop ideas or things from being

printed—censorship and all that. I don't think so. But when something is so completely illegal and immoral as child pornography, I believe in my heart of hearts that we have that obligation to shut down those who permit it to happen. That would go all the way to the top. That would go to the Googles and everyone else who allows that to enter into the Internet and does nothing about it. As this legislation goes forward, I would like for us to start looking really strongly at taking the necessary steps to stop it at its source, to stop the avenue that people are using and to make sure that our children are, in all ways, protected.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and make a few comments on Bill 37, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act to protect Ontario's children. I believe it's called the Child Pornography Reporting Act, 2008. I haven't had a lot of opportunity to review this bill—it just came in the last day or so—but I want to congratulate the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for bringing it forward to begin with.

This is a debate that I believe has to take place in this House. We have to draw much more attention to the fact that these terrible crimes are actually being committed to the most vulnerable people in our society, our kids.

I have a lot of respect for the law enforcement agencies. I believe that over the last few years, they've been able to do a fairly good job in trying to identify a lot of the offenders and large organizations that do it on a mass scale, and I know there have been a number of important arrests. In my time as critic for community safety and correctional services, I've actually had a chance to attend a number of events dealing with Internet luring and child pornography, and I've actually toured Project P with the Ontario Provincial Police. I've got to tell you, people who are able to work in that field, day in and day out, deserve so much respect from the citizens of our province because these images would wear on anybody. They're the type of things that I can hardly imagine how you could not think of those images when you go back to your own family in the evening.

There are a couple of things I wanted to point out that I think are fairly important with this. One of the areas that I'm really concerned with in the bill is the whole idea of someone retaliating against someone who has reported a crime. In some cases these people who are on to child pornography could be family members, and there may be a lot of people who would have great fear of reporting the crime. One of the reasons they would fear it is that in many of the cases I've seen I don't think penalties have been nearly severe enough. If anyone has any comments on that—I'm not sure what the length of penalties is for people who participate in child pornography, but I can tell you that I've heard mostly complaints that they're not nearly strong enough. I'd be interested in the member's comments, if she could respond to any of that later on: What type of penalties are we seeing for people who are actually committing these crimes? I know that the penalty for not reporting can be a

fine of up to \$50,000 and two years in prison, which in a lot of cases I believe would be much more than the penalty that people receive for the actual crime. So I would be really worried about people not wanting to report the crime for fear of retaliation from someone committing the crime.

One thing I thought was fairly positive was when the federal government passed the Tackling Violent Crime Act, Bill C-2. It was just passed in the federal Senate a few weeks back. I know that it did raise the age of consent in Canada from 14 to 16, because a lot of law enforcement agencies were having a really difficult time with the 14- and 15-year-old kids who had been attracted to participate in sexual activities because of Internet luring. At least this would be a step that will help us somewhat, that now they will actually have the age of consent raised, and it should help law enforcement agencies as the children become older and more experienced.

One thing that this bill will need, though, is additional people to help enforce it. I'm not sure what kind of numbers we're talking about at this time. I know the government has tried in the past—all the governments have tried in the past—to increase funding in this area, but there's certainly no question that if we bring in the people who we would want to see report these incidents, we will need to have more officers available in that area. I call on the government—the federal government has on the table, I believe, \$156 million that the Ontario government has to agree to sign on to by the end of March to hire new police officers. I'm hoping that in the provincial budget next week and in the negotiations with the federal government, our government would not be foolish enough to turn down \$156 million over five years to hire new law enforcement officers. I know there is the whole thing about the length of the hiring of these officers and that this money is not sustainable into the future, but that would be step two. After we agree to take on the \$156 million to hire 1,000 new officers, then I think we should go back to the federal government and try to make sure that after five years, after this review, this would continue on and be sustainable funding for the future. It looks right now like it's not going to happen that way, but it's something that we can all work together on, to make it positive and make it happen in the future so we do have those officers who can work in these very specialized areas.

You know, I think one of the things that is important today, why we're having this debate—the member brought it forward. I know she has young children of her own. People hear about this on a day-to-day basis. We read it about it in newspaper articles or we see it in TV stories. You know, it's actually hard to believe that it even occurs in this world. I can't believe there are this many sick people out there who lure children through the Internet or participate in child pornography. In my mind it's absolutely hard to believe. But it happens, and we as parliamentarians, whether it's at this level of government, the federal level of government or with all the nations combined bringing their services together, somehow have to stop this from actually taking place.

1040

I want to conclude here by saying to the member that our party will be supporting this bill. We hope that your government members will come on side with it as well—and not just to stop here today, like so many private members' bills, but to move it forward in the future. I'm someone in this House who really believes in private members' time. I think we've seen some great bills come through here, and quite often, down the road the government will adopt the bill, one way or the other—like the bill that was brought forward yesterday by the Minister of Transportation, which was almost identical to the bill that Laurie Scott presented in this House in the last Parliament. Maybe if we had adopted Laurie Scott's bill in the last Parliament, we would have had less emissions into the air and more safety on the highways, but we didn't do it. So there's an opportunity here, no matter when we come forward with private members' bills, to actually try to get them adopted by the government—not just one or two per session but maybe eight or 10 or 20 per session.

I've seen absolutely magnificent bills presented in this House by all three political parties that just kind of get shut down. You remember last year, when the House adjourned on June 6? We still had three weeks to go, and what happened? There were all kinds—I think something like 110 private members' bills might have been brought forward for debate, but we didn't debate them, and that's very, very unfortunate.

To the member, I congratulate her again for bringing it forward. I think it's a bill that, at the very least, will draw more and more attention to this very, very sick crime of child pornography and Internet luring. I thank her for doing it and I wish her well as we proceed to pass this bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My apologies getting up; it's a little bit hard with these knees today.

I want to say up front, as my colleague the member from Beaches–East York said, that we will be supporting the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's bill. We see this as a debate that needs to happen, and quite frankly, I think the more you try to bring this stuff out in the open and less behind closed doors and in the corners, the better I think that we're able to deal with this as a society.

I just use as an example the following: As we were growing up as young people, the whole issue of sexual exploitation of children was not something that we talked a lot about, but it happened in the times that we grew up. A number of people in this assembly might have been victims of that; I don't know, but the stats tell us that in fact far more went on than meets the eye. Part of the problem was that everybody was very hush-hush about it if it happened, and as a result of people not talking about it and not putting it out in society, people felt that they could do it and get away with it. So I think these kinds of debates are very helpful because they bring it out into the open, and they say to people, "This is not the type of behaviour that society should tolerate," for all the reasons that have been said in the debate this morning. I think the

more we put this out in the open and talk about the need for people to respect each other and not to engage in these kinds of acts, either involved explicitly in sexual acts with children or pornography, the more we send the message out there that it's not acceptable and that we need to as a society respect people, especially those people who are less able to defend themselves, such as children.

I do want to say, though, that the bill needs to go to committee. The way the bill is written, and as I read it this morning, there are a number of things that I think we're going to have to look at if you're going to make this bill work the way that the author wants it to work.

First of all, we know that we have limited powers here on this particular issue provincially, because most of this falls under the Criminal Code. And as we all know, I would imagine, there are already statutes in the Criminal Code that deal with parts of this. We need to find some way to complement and to try to find a way to assist, to help eventually changing acts in the Criminal Code that are federal to deal with some of this. That doesn't mean to say that we as a province are powerless or can't do this, because there are a number of things we can do.

I would urge that members vote for this bill. I can tell you that New Democrats will support it. But we do need to get it into committee, because I think we need to talk to people who are in the know about, first of all, the way laws are written, and speak to police enforcement and others about how this bill can maybe be structured differently. I note in this bill that we're making changes to one act, the Child and Family Services Act, but there may be a few other amendments that need to be made to other acts as well. I'm not going to get into that this morning—there's not enough time—but I think we need to make this a bit more comprehensive.

The other thing I want to say is, I think the author probably recognized that this bill will do nothing to get the perpetrators. As my colleague from Beaches–East York says, those people who engage in the practice of looking at pornography on the Internet are not going to report themselves. They, by and large, try to do it in a dark corner somewhere in their home, hope to heck nobody sees them, and figure they can get away with it. But I think the strength of it is that it allows those of us who might be surfing the Net and who quite unintentionally come across such a site to say, "Hey, hang on a second. Look at this," and report it to officials so that we can assist the police in tracking these websites and finding out who is going on those websites, in an attempt to catch the perpetrators.

We know that the police, such as the RCMP and the Ontario Provincial Police, have entire divisions of their police forces that deal exclusively with this, that watch Internet sites to try to determine who is hitting what sites in an attempt to shut those sites down, because I think the best way around it is to try to limit the ability of people to access this stuff, but also to catch the perpetrators, those who are engaged in the act. So if it's going to do anything, I think it might help us in assisting the police to

identify sources of pornography. But I don't believe for a minute that the perpetrators are going to say, "Oh, hang on, I've got to go report myself," and I'm sure the member doesn't believe that either. So I see this piece of legislation as a way to support the efforts made by our police.

The other thing I just want to say quickly is that there is a potential with this bill—and I think that's one of the reasons we have to look at it—for somebody to get caught up in a wrongful accusation. I had somebody come by my constituency office last spring or winter—I can't remember exactly when. It's a long story, but what happened is that this individual works in a fairly large office with other people, and there are a whole bunch of computers available, and for whatever reason the computers are not password-protected. I would think in this day and age everybody password-protects. What happened is that somebody was going on this individual's computer and was cruising sites such as the ones mentioned in this bill. The systems people came down to fix the computer and noticed all this stuff inside the registry or the history portion of the Internet, under options, and reported it promptly to the manager. The manager called this person in, and this person had to do a whole bunch of explaining that it wasn't him. I suppose, because he told me it wasn't him, that it wasn't. Maybe it was and maybe it wasn't. The point is, with this bill, you could end up in a situation where somebody somehow gets on to a person's computer, does a whole bunch of cruising on those sites, and all of a sudden, as a way of getting at the individual, makes an accusation, and how do you prove it wasn't you? So you could end up with a wrongful accusation.

I'm not saying I would not support the bill on the basis of that, but we need to think that through a little bit, because there have been instances where that has happened in the past. We need to figure out how to draft the legislation in such a way that people don't use this legislation as a tool to get back at other people for whatever.

I support the bill. New Democrats support the bill. We believe that as a society, at all levels of government, we need to do what we can to bring issues such as these out into the open. The more we talk about it, as a civil society, out in the open, the more we send the message that these actions should not be tolerated in a society such as ours and that in fact there should be, and have to be, laws to protect the innocent—in this case the children—and to get to the perpetrators. The more we talk about it, the better it is, because at the end of the day we send a very strong message that these actions are not acceptable and they are not things that should be condoned by a society such as ours.

I would expect this bill to pass at second reading, but again I say that I look forward to time in committee, because I think the member probably recognizes that we need to have an opportunity to have a discussion with those people who might be a little bit more informed about some of the practicalities of making a bill like this

work. I'm thinking there are probably amendments to a couple of other acts that could be made to give this a little bit more enforcement, to actually make a difference when it comes to enforcement. We need to take a look at a couple of other provisions to make sure that we do this right in the first place so that we don't end up with a bill at the end that is not as strong as it needs to be.

With that, I look forward to the vote.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am just delighted to be here this morning to speak in support of second reading of this bill. I was very pleased when the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore told me what she was planning to do. I have to tell you, I was a bit surprised that it was not already included in what our duty to our children is, so I welcome this as an opportunity to update the duty that already exists to report abuse and neglect if you are suspicious that a child is in fact being abused or neglected. So I want to thank and congratulate the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who never stops making the world better. Thank you for that.

It sounds a bit like a cliché, but our children are our future. We need to not only provide them with the supports they need to achieve their full potential—this government has really been active in taking good steps towards that with things like the Ontario child benefit and many other good things we are doing—but we also have a responsibility for their protection. The adults in this world have to look after the kids, and it's as simple as that. We are always looking for ways to make sure our kids are safe. We are always looking for ways to combat abuse and exploitation, and we must continue to be vigilant.

The duty to report already does exist. In fact, I've got with me a copy of the booklet that talks about the duty to report. I just want to mention that the Child and Family Services Act, which we're talking about amending, recognizes that each of us has a responsibility for the welfare of children. The current legislation does a good job in giving our child protection system the framework and tools they need to protect children.

The definition of a child in need of protection in the CFSA includes a child who has been or is at risk of being "sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child." Under the act, any individual who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been or is at risk of being abused or neglected has a duty to report that information to the children's aid society.

It's not a question of "Do you think I should report this?" There is no dilemma here. You have a duty to report it. I hope that people who are listening to this debate understand that they already have a duty to report any suspicion of a child being in danger. The duty to report specifically requires a person to report where they suspect a child has been sexually exploited or is at risk of

such exploitation by the person having charge of the child or where that person knows or should know of the possibility of sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child. The act does not, however, specifically identify a duty to report evidence of child pornography. This bill, if passed, would identify a duty to report evidence of child pornography.

I have a quote here from a remarkable woman, Barb MacQuarrie, who is the community director of the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children in London. They are from London, in my riding, but they are national and international leaders on this issue. Barb MacQuarrie told me I could use this in the Legislature. She writes: "Child pornography is child sexual abuse. It hurts real children in real ways. We all share an ethical imperative to protect the dignity and integrity of children by reporting anyone who would violate a child by viewing them in a pornographic image."

The list of people who support this initiative is long and diverse; from the police, to people concerned about children, the list is long. It has broad support, and I just want to add my voice to the people who want to say that we must continue to improve our protection of children. We must take away the guesswork on this. You don't have to debate this one in your head; you don't have to seek advice. If you see evidence of child abuse, you have a responsibility to report it, because any child pornography, by definition, includes child abuse.

I welcome this initiative. I look forward to further debate. We do have to take the next step, though. I urge all members to vote in favour of the bill, and then we'll continue to work to protect children.

It's really appropriate that this is a bill we're debating today, because the focus of this government has been very much on children, whether it's the improvements to our education system, where we're now starting to see some really exciting results with 10,000 more kids graduating each year than a few years ago; we're starting to see more kids getting the nutrition they need through the student nutrition program; we're starting to see kids get opportunities for jobs that they never had before. The Ontario child benefit starts rolling out every month this July. It is up to \$50 per child, per month, going to \$91 per child, per month. I always think of that as a grocery cart of food. I see \$50 worth of good, healthy food that will be going into homes that didn't before. That will start rolling out this July.

I'm out of time here, but I want to close by congratulating the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for her initiative on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Broten, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank my friends all across the House for their indications of support with respect to this bill. I want to highlight a couple of the areas where I think the bill speaks very directly to issues of concern.

First of all, the bill protects the identity of the informant and protects them from any liability that might occur. That is critical. It also builds upon what is already a very strong provincial strategy with respect to combatting Internet crimes, where the province is working with groups like Cybertip.ca and others to put in place programs like Cleanfeed Canada, where Internet sites are being shut down. This bill speaks directly to everyone, and "everyone" includes those who provide service on the Internet, those who have the knowledge about what may be transferring across their networks. This bill very much speaks to those dark corners on the Internet. It parallels some steps that have been taken in US jurisdictions and a bill that is now pending in Manitoba, where police and child protection agencies have worked together, as I have brought them together in the development of this bill, to protect kids.

That's what this bill is about: the jurisdiction of the provinces with respect to protecting kids and the jurisdiction of the federal government with respect to the Criminal Code and all other matters. There may well need to be steps taken in that fight, and I certainly have committed myself to raising those issues as we tackle this scourge on so many fronts. We need to do our work here in the province; we need to do our work around the country and around the globe. But first and foremost, this bill is protecting Ontario's kids and telling Ontarians, "You need to report if you see that image of child pornography because it is an image of child abuse."

I look forward to seeing this bill pass second reading, advocating it and moving it forward.

1100

CANADIAN MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN CANADIENS

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to promote the purchase of Canadian mass transit vehicles / Projet de loi 31, Loi favorisant l'achat de véhicules de transport en commun canadiens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mr. Bisson, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've got a sore knee. It's hard to get up today.

I first of all want to say that this has been a long-standing issue for a number of people in Ontario, especially in places like Thunder Bay and others where construction of mass transit vehicles takes place.

Just to give you a bit of a historical perspective, Bombardier in Thunder Bay, as you know, in 1992 or 1993 had a memorandum of understanding with the province of Ontario that said that at least 50% of mass transit vehicles, light rail, etc. would be constructed here in

Ontario. For whatever reason, that particular agreement, that particular law, was struck down by the McGuinty government in the last term. I don't quite understand why they didn't continue with that particular understanding with Bombardier, because it is good policy from the perspective of the province of Ontario having an opportunity to utilize our public dollars to the best possible effect. It only makes sense that if the province of Ontario is going to spend money to buy buses, to buy transit vehicles of whatever type, be it GO Transit or subway cars or streetcars, as much as humanly possible we need to see how much of that can be constructed here in Ontario. We know, for example, that announcements that have been made recently, such as the announcement that was made earlier this week where some 300 hybrid buses have been delivered to the TTC—over 60% of the construction of those buses was not done here in Ontario but in fact was done in the United States.

So we say to ourselves: Why shouldn't we be utilizing public dollars to the best possible effect to make sure that we create jobs here in Ontario and sustain those that we currently have? Is this something that's radical, new and different? I would say no. If you take a look, this is typical legislation that exists in all kinds of other jurisdictions around the world.

For example, here in North America, the United States has a law that says that 60% of whatever monies that are invested by the federal government in transit vehicles—they have to be constructed in the United States. You have to remember that the United States is different than Canada: The federal government plays a much larger role than the states when it comes to the amount of money expended on transit. They have a federal law there that says that 60% has to be built in the United States. Even Mexico, south of the United States, has similar laws that say, I think, that 50% of their construction has to be done within Mexico itself. In the European Union, almost every nation has similar provisions.

Why? Because it makes sense. If we're going to spend public dollars, we should, as much as humanly possible, move toward trying to have that construction done within our own jurisdiction.

I listened to the government originally say, yes, they thought this was a good idea and that they were going to support the bill, and I was somewhat encouraged by that. I know my colleague the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan has a similar bill that he had in the House for two or three years in the last term and has reintroduced in this term that calls for 60%, so I look forward to his support on this bill, because certainly I'm going to support his. I think it's only right. It goes in the right direction, so I'm looking forward to that. But recently the government has come out and said, no, they're not going to support the bill, and I say to myself, what are the arguments?

One of the arguments put forward was, if you have a 50% content rule, it's going to force construction to happen outside of Ontario, because we export goods such as mass transit vehicles to other jurisdictions, and if we have 50% we're going to limit our opportunity in the

export market. I just say: Hogwash. We're already limited in the export market because the United States and others we trade with have similar laws. When the United States buys a transit vehicle and they happen to get a contract with Orion Bus out of Toronto, you can only do 40% of the construction here.

In fact, last week I spoke to the workers up at Bombardier, along with my leader, Howard Hampton, and they have similar content rules. For example, right now they're building the same type of trains that we have for GO Transit that are being sold to the United States, and when they do the construction of these trains up in Thunder Bay, they have to make sure that no more than 40% of the actual construction is done in Thunder Bay. It is then shipped off to the United States by rail and then the rest of the assembly is done in the United States. So we're not going to be limiting our opportunities for export; those opportunities have been limited by right of legislation that exists in other countries.

The other argument that's put forward—and I've heard people say, "This means there won't be competition." Again: Hogwash. We know, for example, that the province of Ontario said that by the year 2020 we expect to spend \$17.5 billion on transit vehicles, light rail and other things here in Ontario. If you're Siemens or one of the other companies that is in the business of constructing buses or whatever it might be and there's a large contract in the province of Ontario that you want to bid on, one of the things you're going to look at is the ability to build a plant of some type here in Ontario to do that construction. Members across the way will say, "Oh, they were never going to do that."

What does Bombardier do? Bombardier of Canada has plants in the United States, France, Germany and different parts of the wide world because there are content rules in those jurisdictions that say that if you want to build transit vehicles, a percentage has to be done within that country. You've seen the ads for Bombardier somewhere in some German city where a worker is taking a picture of a light rail transit car going across some old city in Germany. The person's very proud to show that that's Canadian technology. That train wasn't built in Canada. It might be Canadian design. That train is 98% built in Germany even though it's a Canadian company. What happens is, those manufacturers of these vehicles, whatever they might be, if the contract is large enough, are going to have to make a decision, "Do we want to bid on that contract? Does it make sense? If so, we need to do production facilities here in Ontario," which is only good for workers here in Ontario. It means we have an opportunity to make sure that the dollars we spend when it comes to transit are done here in Ontario.

I want to say to members across the way that there is another provision in the bill, if we take the time to read it. There is another argument saying, "Oh, we're going to end up with a non-competitive bid system." Hogwash, because the bill is written in such a way that ensures that there is a competitive bid process and that we don't put ourselves in a position of having to accept a product that

is of lesser quality. For example, if the lesser-quality product happened to come out of a Canadian company, we don't hamstring ourselves into having to buy a lesser-quality vehicle. That forces our manufacturers to raise the standard. It also ensures that there is a competitive bid process in place to make sure that is done.

Listen: It's not just us in the New Democratic Party, my leader, Howard Hampton, and the rest of the New Democrats who are calling for this bill. If you read the editorials across the province, it's fairly clear. The *Toronto Star*, which is well known to have a position on this, has come out in support, saying, "It's high time that we do." The *Toronto Sun*, the *Thunder Bay Chronicle* and a number of workers and companies across the province of Ontario have supported this initiative.

I'm asking members across the way to allow this bill to go through second reading. Let's get it into committee. If you think there are some things that need to be changed, I'm open to amendments. I'm not ideologically—not "ideologically"; I'm not wedded to the point that the bill has to be written exactly the way it is. If we think we can do something to strengthen the bill to make sure we get to where we want to go in the end, that's fine by me. We allow that to happen at the committee level. That's what committees are all about.

I say to members across the way: This particular bill is one that is going to serve the province of Ontario well in two respects: It's going to ensure that the dollars we spend are spent here in Ontario, and it's going to assist Ontario workers to have jobs.

In the last minute I have, I want to respond to one of the points that the Minister of Transportation made. He talked about one of the initiatives that the government has put forward and he said that 82% of that money is going to be spent here in Ontario. Yes, the construction of light rail, the construction of infrastructure on the ground: Of course a majority that's going to be done in the province of Ontario because you can't do a construction project that's putting tracks in the city of Toronto and build it in California. To use the argument saying that 82% of it already happens in Ontario is false. Eighty-two per cent of the construction certainly happens in Ontario when it comes to putting in infrastructure, but when it comes to the manufacturing of the products that are used, such as buses and trains, GO trains and subway cars, we need to make sure that a majority of that—or 50% of that, I should say—are built here in Ontario.

Quite frankly, we're not there. We know, for example, that the announcement made this morning on the double-decker buses—they're not built here in Ontario. A majority of that, about 90% of it, was built overseas.

1110

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I'm really quite delighted to be here to talk a little bit about the bill that my friend le député de Timmins—James Bay has put in front of us today. I think it's an interesting bill. The House, as some people know, gave unanimous consent so this bill could

be heard today. It didn't have the normal time limits that would be there, but the government and all members gave unanimous consent so it could be heard.

What I find entertaining, if nothing else, is that my friend, who I think has been here for some 17 or 18 years now, didn't avail himself of legislative research. I know that perhaps the NDP research budget is strapped, I know that perhaps they don't have the resources to possibly do the job they should do, but virtually every piece of information that the member just put out about other trade agreements and components in other countries and other provinces is wrong. It has a tiny, little bit of truth to it, but if you look at the entire issue, it is wrong. Not one single Canadian province has a commitment to purchase transit in their own province.

But I've got a news flash. I just received a note from the Ministry of Transportation telling me that, for the first time ever, the province of Quebec has a procurement policy for mass transit—for the first time ever. It never existed before. This morning it was announced in Quebec. It's a buy-Canadian policy: not a buy-Quebec policy, but a buy-Canadian policy.

My good friend the member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan has a bill in front of the House that speaks to that, that speaks to the fact that a buy-Canadian policy should be instituted. We believe we should go forward to make sure that Ontarians and Canadians benefit from public investment in all sectors, not just transportation. The government is working towards finding ways to make sure that we absolutely maximize every dollar for public transit that is spent in the province of Ontario. I have every confidence that our good friends at Bombardier in Thunder Bay will be able to compete in that kind of situation and win the contracts, because our workers, our companies, are the best in the world. So I have every confidence that it will happen.

But my good friend seems to forget some things. He seems to forget that his party opposed subway lines. You can't have subway cars if you don't have the subway line. It just cannot happen. Fifty per cent of nothing is nothing.

I know about this. As the member for Algoma—Manitoulin, I've had the pleasure to serve that fine constituency for some 20 years. The NDP used to have a policy for many, many years, probably decades, that they would buy—or Ontario Hydro rather, the crown corporation, would buy, 100% of its fuel requirements for uranium from Ontario sources. They would buy 100% of that uranium in Ontario. There was only one place in Ontario you could buy uranium, and that was in Elliot Lake. The NDP promised continually, through every election campaign—every convention I could see, they all went there and everybody was very much in favour of buying that 100% of the uranium. We had a very vibrant uranium mining business in Elliot Lake. In that city, we employed about 4,000 miners with good-paying, excellent jobs. The policy of the NDP was to purchase 100% of the uranium there.

Do you know what happened? The NDP was elected in 1990, and within a few short months two northern

NDP ministers appeared in Elliot Lake to tell that community and to tell the workers that all 4,000 of them would be out of work, that they were cancelling the Ontario Hydro contracts to buy uranium in Elliot Lake. Do you know what the reason was for doing that? The reason for abrogating their policy was that it was too expensive to buy in Elliot Lake, that we shouldn't do it in Ontario because it cost too much money. That's what Ms. Martel and Mr. Wildman, when they appeared in Elliot Lake, said.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: My colleagues will be following me and we will discuss this with a little more information, but I seem to have struck a nerve. The 4,000 mining folks in Elliot Lake do not forget.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on private members' business—an opportunity for the first time in 2008. I commend the member from Timmins—James Bay for bringing forward Bill 31, the Canadian Mass Transit Vehicles Act, 2008. This being the first day of spring, it's also a pleasure to stand here, and hopefully the snow has stopped falling.

We're talking transit specifically in this act that's been brought forward. I can say right off the top that we're very supportive of the intent of this legislation from the member. It appears to me that the underlying intent is that we need to do our utmost to encourage this government to promote Ontario and Canadian businesses, and those who work for those businesses. It's even truer when it comes to decisions and directions that we take with the public's money, which this bill is reflecting—money that is entrusted by the people of Ontario to this government; most importantly, using taxpayers' money in the public's best interest. It's been said many times that it doesn't seem to mean much to the government side, who are doing everything that they can to deflect the fact that Ontario has lost—is it 180,000, or is it up to 190,000 manufacturing jobs?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's 210,000.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's 210,000, the member from Halton tells me, who's going to also speak later to this bill. That's a big figure, and something that the present Liberal government is not addressing.

What else aren't they addressing about Ontario's economy? Ontario is facing the slowest growth in the entire country. The unemployment rate in Ontario has exceeded the national average for the first time in 30 years. Consumer confidence is down. Confidence in investing in Ontario is down. We have an out-migration of skilled workers in record numbers.

I can tell you that this affects my riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, as well as the rest of Ontario. We've had sad news, as many parts of Ontario have had, with two manufacturers that closed down last year. Fleetwood RV shut its doors and Bonar Plastics announced that it's closing—hundreds and hundreds of good-paying manufacturing jobs. Those manufacturing jobs in small communities affect a large, large group of people—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Fleetwood's back.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —I'm getting to the story—from shops to restaurants, who depend on those local jobs staying in our community. I know that the member from Peterborough has been very anxious for me to say that we did have good news on a partial recovery for the RV industry. Great Lakes RV had a managed buyout, in co-operation with lots of local community members and workers from the previous plant, and has reopened its doors. We encourage them and I'm very proud of the effort that they've made. I hope to see that they will continue to expand.

Bill 31's intent, I think, relates very much to the tough economic times that are happening in Ontario. In—

Mr. Jeff Leal: What's the story about Fleetwood? FEMA—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from Peterborough, order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: In December, I hosted a round-table meeting with a number of small-business representatives in my Lindsay office, and they were feeling the crunch. It was in the first part of November. The Canadian dollar had gone up quickly, they had an increase in energy costs under this government, more red tape, and increasing tax burdens. They came and said, "We have to do something. We're hurting. Our businesses are hurting and we're going to go out. People have to be educated about why they need to shop locally and be more aware of where products are made."

From that campaign—and I'm quite proud of the community, the municipality, the chambers and the BIA in our Lindsay area. The press came on board; the local press did a fantastic job, and we all got together and got the Shop Locally campaign, where they had stickers on bags, people were educated about why they need to shop locally, and they came to the shopkeepers and said, "We're more aware and we're going to be more conscious of that." So that was a good success story, a local initiative, and it does speak to the intent of the bill that's here, from a different angle. It's all about shopping and buying locally, and being made aware of what's made locally.

Our small-business sector is hurting; our manufacturing is hurting. Yesterday in the chamber, the Minister of Small Business got a very important and relevant question and deflected it to the Minister of Labour and did not answer the question. No wonder Ontario's entrepreneurs and business owners are dejected. The minister representing them in this Legislature, the minister of small business, is silent on the issues that are facing them. I read statistics earlier. They cannot be ignored. With what's going on in Ontario, we have to be responsible to the people and do what we can to assist them. This government is not doing that, but Bill 31 here is addressing aspects that the government needs to focus on.

1120

Just two weeks ago, my colleague from Oxford, the critic for agriculture, came up to Lindsay for a round table meeting with local agricultural commodity representatives. Again, the point was made clear: the hard-

working producers need progressive, active and long-term solutions to meet the challenges they are facing. The inadequacies were brought up here, specifically for the hog programs in Ontario, the group of people who are falling through the cracks and need to be assisted. The critic for agriculture, the member for Oxford, made that point to the Minister of Agriculture. We've certainly heard about that in our communities, and I'm sure the member from Peterborough has been made aware of that, because our ridings are very closely associated and we have similar producers. I'm sure he's doing his best within his government to bring attention forward to the inadequacies, specifically to the hog farmers, in that.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I know the member from Peterborough is very actively engaged in the debate this morning. Let us talk about the proposed rail service from Peterborough to Toronto, which this provincial government does not seem to know much about. But the federal government has stepped up to the plate, money is earmarked for a rail project, and they're waiting for a commitment from the Liberal government here, from the Ontario finance minister.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No details.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The member for Peterborough again mentions details. There is certainly a commuter rail report, which I know the member for Peterborough was presented with last fall.

The finance ministers, both federally and provincially, are speaking. We were speaking with the Minister Cannon's office today, and certainly, they are working with the province; they need the commitment. I know the member from Peterborough is in support of the commuter rail service between Peterborough and Toronto, which affects ridings represented by members from both sides of the Legislature. I know that he's on for that commitment. I'm hoping that they see the light and will work with the federal government and the many municipalities that support this initiative of the rail line and the studies that have been done on the growth that has happened in our areas and how it's going benefit all of our areas.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Peterborough, come to order.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, the member from Peterborough can get on the train, certainly, when it's up and going.

The need for investment along with the policies that produce results: That's what we're looking for, not band-aids. Clearly the Dalton McGuinty government is just reactive, it's not proactive; it doesn't have a long-term plan.

For those reasons, I support and appreciate the member from Timmins-James Bay for bringing forward this bill this morning. Private members' public business is a great morning in which we can debate openly, even those not on the speaking list, and discuss the challenges facing our economies.

I'm running out of time, so I'd better stop. The member from Timmins-James Bay has said that he wants it to

go to committee, that he's flexible, and if there are some better ideas that could be brought forward, he's willing to do that. I think we owe it to the people of Ontario that we should take this to committee and flesh this out more, and make this government more responsible to the people of Ontario.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like the start by complimenting my colleague on this bill. This bill is long overdue. We need protectionism in the province of Ontario for our workers and our industries. This is a big step in that direction. The government talks about job creation in the province—here's a perfect opportunity for this government to step up to the plate.

What is good about this bill? This bill would benefit numerous industries in our province, starting with the steel industry in Hamilton and Sault Ste. Marie, all the secondary industries that supply the steel plants: glass manufacturers, plastic manufacturers, assembly plants, automotive producers and parts manufacturers. Who works in these plants? Trades: welders, electricians, hydraulic experts, plumbing, pipe assembly. Millions and millions of man-hours could be produced in this province through these types of bills. Why aren't we moving on it? There's preventative maintenance of the fleets, jobs of labour mechanics, reassembly, recovery, rubber manufacturers—tires. Firestone left Hamilton and went back to the States. Gee, if we had these types of bills in place at that time, maybe Firestone wouldn't have left. Maybe Massey Ferguson wouldn't have left Hamilton. These are the types of businesses that have fled in droves from this country.

I was really amazed yesterday, when I looked in the Metro paper on Wednesday the 19th and saw, to my shock, two GO buses sitting in the Halifax port. There were five more being unloaded—GO buses; government-sponsored GO buses for Toronto. Where were they manufactured? After getting off a boat, I don't think they were manufactured in Canada.

The member across the floor mentioned Bombardier and their competitiveness. It's a tremendous company, a company that's known throughout the world for its quality. However, all our companies in Ontario and Canada cannot compete. Why? Because we can't match their labour costs. They're paying people in their countries a third, a quarter of what our tradespeople and labourers make in this province. How can you possibly compete in a contract, like the member said, if you're dealing against those types of odds? It's not going happen. That's why we're buying a lot of these things overseas, because we don't have the manufacturing plants to have them built here. We have an abundance of trades and skilled labour in this province that are not being utilized to their full capacity. There are hundreds and hundreds of fully qualified journeymen who can't get work or are laid off. Once they're laid off, they have to collect unemployment.

It's amazing that the member thinks that we can compete. The Liberals—the government—like to talk about a global market. Great; I'd love to compete in a global market if it was fair, but the deck is stacked against us.

We can't compete because we don't have the proper facilities to be sponsored by the government. They do band-aid solutions, they throw money at the automotive sectors, but what do these companies do—foreign-owned companies, I might add? They say, "If you don't give us \$200 million or \$400 million, we're going to leave. We're going to lay people off. We're going to shut down. We're going to go back to the States. We're going to go back to Japan." Boy, that's a real good thing, holding us hostage: "We'll leave unless you give us taxpayers' money"—unacceptable.

What we need is more Canadian content and more Canadian jobs so we can, as the member wants to say, compete in this global market. If we had the proper material—we are the richest country in the world for raw materials. What are we doing now? We've even got diamond mines in Ontario. People are coming to us, but they're coming under their rules, not under our rules, not under our laws that protect our jobs.

This legislation has to change. The economic policies of this government are unbelievable. It's just, "Throw \$400 million here; throw \$300 million," hoping that the ghost will go away, but he doesn't. He comes back to the trough for more—more and more and more. Where does it end? I'll tell you where it ends: It ends when we have Canadian content and Canadian jobs. That's where it ends. This bill speaks volumes towards that end.

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: For the information of the member across the floor, when I lobbied in Ottawa, while I was there, we lost Falconbridge to Xstrata. Telus took over all the foreign-owned industry in British Columbia and Alberta. This is going on all over our country. Until we open our eyes and see what's really going on, we're going to be in trouble.

1130

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance to comment on Bill 31, Canadian Mass Transit Vehicles Act, 2008, which was introduced by my friend here on my right side, the member from Timmins—James Bay.

When he was talking about how made-in-Ontario bills or laws should be implemented in the province of Ontario, it's good for local consumption and it's good for media talk, the reality is that the member forgot we live in a province that is part of a whole nation and we have some kind of agreement with those provinces. We work together on many different levels. Also, some of the product has to be Canadian content in order to get support from the federal government, because some money is also attached to it. We cannot live in isolation.

Also, he does not remember maybe that we have a lot of agreements with the provinces around us and we have a good working relationship with them. We cannot, as a province, close the door on ourselves to say whatever we produce in this province we have to consume and we have to deal with.

We have to remember that we as a province have great ambitions, and these ambitions give us the ability to

compete on a provincial level, on a Canadian level, as well as on the international market, if we equip our people and our companies with the tools they need in order to be able to compete. That's why we create many different initiatives, one of which is Move Ontario 2020, which gives us almost \$17.5 billion to invest on transit in Toronto and the Hamilton area in order to create good communication lines, in order to give the ability to many people to commute without any problem and, in the meantime, stimulate the economy and create jobs. This initiative wasn't supported by the NDP and also didn't get supported by the Conservatives.

Our transit tax initiative, which creates a lot of jobs for many people in the province of Ontario and also helps municipalities to renew their fleets and their transit systems, also wasn't supported by the NDP. The subway extension from Spadina to Vaughan wasn't supported by the NDP.

All these initiatives would support our transit, which the member from James Bay was talking about all morning—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Of course the NDP supports subways.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: —that we should have made-in-Ontario products and consume—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We had a whole bunch of construction going on, and the Tories cancelled it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It is very important for us to remember our company; it's a great company. We have good skilled workers in the province of Ontario. If we give them the tools and initiative, I guess they'll be able to compete not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but in the international market.

That's why, Mr. Speaker, we invested \$1.2 billion in a program called Next Generation to allow a company \$5 million and above to borrow money from the government, to get a loan from the government, to get grants from the government in order to support them and enhance their ability, enhance their products, and expand. We also partner with universities and colleges in the province of Ontario to have good products that give us the chance to compete not just in Canada, but also in the international market. These are the initiatives we should put in place, not just sit and complain. I know this is a very big issue for northern Ontario, an emotional issue, but we're not working on an emotional level here. We're working with reality. The reality is we are not just living in isolation in this nation or in isolation with the whole globe. We have aspirations. We have the ability to compete and to send our products everywhere on the whole earth if we put the right investment in the right place and if we work hard to enhance our products and our companies.

Mr. Speaker, I think we have to stop the talk; we have to act, and that's what we are here to do. We are lucky. We are privileged to have a government that understands the reality, understands the future of the province, instead of just sitting and crying. The member opposite said,

"We have to do this, we have to do this, and we have to close the door on ourselves in order to protect our company and our factories." He has to remember we cannot consume the products we produce in this province. We have to have the ability and the connections to send the products outside this province, outside this nation, in order to give us the ability to keep prospering and continue being a hub for many different institutions and factories and companies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak. Hopefully, my colleague will continue later on and explain to the people of Ontario about the misconception about this bill.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I am pleased to talk about this, and it's a very topical subject today.

The bloodshed that's taking place on the TSX and the New York Stock Exchange may indicate that we're headed down the road into some difficulties. Certainly the Canadian dollar is dropping, I think two or three cents in the last couple of days, and that would auger well for Ontario's manufacturing sector. The government would be familiar with the manufacturing sector. That's the one they've been ignoring for the last five years and one which has been decimated in this province to a degree that about 23% or 24% of the former manufacturing jobs that existed in Ontario no longer exist. Perhaps if I have some time, I'll say more about that.

This bill would give some advantages to Ontario manufacturers of rail cars and buses, those kinds of things. I'm pleased to give at least moral support to this type of legislation. I think this particular bill should have made some mention of NAFTA and the World Trade Organization and their rules around this type of thing. Both the North American free trade agreement and the World Trade Organization specifically exempt transportation equipment. However, they also have sections in their agreements that call for fair trade between countries, and within those kinds of clauses there are elements where bidders on a particular manufacturing site have to be equally treated, no matter which section of the economy they're in. So if a bidder who is manufacturing rail cars in Thunder Bay is bidding for a particular contract in New York City and somebody from Wisconsin is bidding on that same contract, those two contractors, if their contracts are similar, in other words, if you're buying as much product in the United States and the two bids are similar, they must be treated in a similar fashion under NAFTA, and sensibly under the World Trade Organization, although that's a much murkier area.

Canada's trade balance—of course, we're a trading nation. That's when these types of agreements become sensitive and somewhat difficult. I'm not sure if Canada is the most trading nation in the world, but I think we must be one or two. Fully 33% to 35% of our gross domestic product is exported out of Canada. The value of our exports equals about 33% to 35% of our gross domestic product. We export a tremendous amount of our manufacturing and raw products and commodities. Therefore, our trading partners are extremely important

to us. It's very important that we don't upset our trading partners and thereby perhaps close some doors. We want to keep all the doors in the world open because we are more dependent on trade than almost any other country in the world. If you take that 33% of our GDP as exported and apply that to the United States, 2% or 3% of the gross domestic product of the United States would be exported. That just gives you an idea of the degree we have in that area and how we have to be very careful about where we go down that road.

There are huge stories around the world as to the protectionism that various countries have dealing with this kind of transportation equipment. One of the worst, I suppose, or the most protectionist around the world would be Japan, and certainly China has a lot of protectionism too. When it comes to transportation equipment, Japanese regulations are such that they effectively eliminate any competition, with the exception of their sole manufacturer, and that would be Kawasaki. Kawasaki effectively is the only company in Japan that can produce this kind of equipment, and that's by government regulation. It contravenes a number of sections of the World Trade Organization, but as I understand it, to this point they have never been taken to the world court.

1140

As I mentioned earlier, this would certainly help the demise of the manufacturing sector. The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock has talked about some of those issues, which I agree with. Those kinds of closures that she talked about continue into 2008. We have seen that the Essex aluminum plant in Windsor is closing, with 600 jobs disappearing on February 6 of this year. Again, the Dana Corp. in Barrie closed, with 155 jobs disappearing in the province. Martinrea in Kitchener closed with 1,200 jobs on February 11; 1,200 manufacturing jobs gone from Ontario. The government has been touting the growth of Toyota in Woodstock, which is going to create something in the order of 900 to 1,000 jobs. Here's 1,200 jobs gone in Kitchener at one stroke of the pen. So the bloodletting continues.

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise in support of this bill. I rise in support of this bill, and it's not just because of this bill, but it's because of the entire history not only of this city but of this province. We've been doing this for a long time. Twenty years ago I was first elected to public office in the borough of East York, as it then was. When I arrived there, the borough of East York had a policy. It wasn't my policy; it was the borough of East York policy that we bought first from the businesses and the factories that were located in the borough of East York. Secondly, if we couldn't find it there or if it was not cost-competitive, then we would buy it from factories and institutions of other places in Ontario. Third, we went to Canada. I don't remember, in the whole time that I was a municipal politician, that we were not able to find the goods and services that we needed, first of all in our own community, second of all in Ontario, third of all in Canada.

I will tell you that that policy was maintained. It was maintained throughout my time in East York. It was maintained when East York was subsumed into the megacity of Toronto, and then Toronto had a similar policy. Toronto still utilizes that policy, and that is why the subway cars were purchased by the city of Toronto from Thunder Bay. The only other option, and there was an option, was to buy the cars from Siemens, a Dutch company, which were going to be manufactured in China. But the citizens of Toronto, through their council, said no. They said that they wanted to buy them here in Ontario to protect the jobs. It is a good municipal strategy that is still being used in Ontario and Canada's largest city. I am merely suggesting, and this bill merely suggests, that the government of Ontario adopt something that has been shown to work over many years.

The second point I want to make in the couple of minutes that I have is to refute some of the catcalls and comments that have been coming from the government bench about New Democrats not supporting subways. That is hogwash; that is nonsense. The New Democrats, between 1990 and 1995, established and were in the process of building four subway lines in Toronto. You all know that's true.

When the Harris government came along, they said no; they were only going to allow one to be built. One that was under construction was filled in with sand, and that was the Eglinton subway line, which to my mind, to this day, was the best of the options available. The one that was eventually built was the Sheppard subway line.

The Sheppard subway line, to my mind and to most people's minds even today, was not the preferred option. We built it because it was the only one left on the table. I remember that vote: It came down and it passed by one vote—Metro council in those days; one solitary vote. I like to think it was mine because even though it wasn't the preferred option, it was the one that we took because it was available and because we could build it.

To my mind, even to this day, the best option was the one that ran through Black Creek in the riding of Eglinton—Lawrence. I would assume that the member from Eglinton—Lawrence knows that that was the best line. New Democrats know that that is and remains the best line. So when New Democrats say, "Why are we building the one up through University and Spadina?" we have a legitimate question to ask. The question is not whether we should build it, because of course we should build it, but is there a better line that could be built? We think the one that could be built and should be built—and the best option for the city of Toronto and for the province—is the Black Creek line to the airport. That's what we think. And if you're going say we don't want this Spadina line, then you're wrong. We want it, but the first priority should be to build it to the airport. That's the thing. Liberals can put forward all the spin they want, because you've got it wrong again.

Those are the two points I want to make. I'm going to leave the remaining time to my leader, the leader of the third party.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm delighted to add my thoughts to this debate. There are just a couple of points I wanted to raise. The first one I'm going to raise is the NDP position on the subway line, because it sticks in my mind and it was the last point the member just made. I was just given the quote by your leader, Howard Hampton—who is going speak next, I understand—about the subway line to Vaughan. He says the following: "We don't need another subway mega-project." That's his quote. Now, there may be something in here that I don't understand, but it seems pretty clear that you can't have production of subway cars if you don't have the subway line. I don't understand why the NDP would take that position, but we'll hear more about that from the leader.

Let's assume that the member from Timmins—James Bay has a good thought in mind. I would assume that all of our objectives here in this Legislature, our goals, should be that we would promote public transit. We're all trying to create jobs, all parties. We'd all like to strengthen our economy; we'd like to support our manufacturing industry. That should be the goal. But we differ, I guess, on how this can be done.

As it stands right now, over the last few months the McGuinty government has undertaken a review of how this government can maximize local jobs. How can that be done? The idea here is that, okay, \$17.5 billion has been committed to transit—\$17.5 billion—and the review indicates how that \$17.5 billion can be used to create jobs. The good news today is that the direct effect of this \$17.5-billion commitment to transit will be 16,000 jobs from money spent on rolling stock, from money spent on transit: 16,000 new jobs, and there may be more. So the review, going through all ministries, is simply this: How can we spend \$17.5 billion and maximize jobs, throughout all ministries? That's what we are undertaking right now.

If Mr. Bisson wants to add his name and his ideas to this concept of how to create and maintain local jobs, that's great. His idea is 50%. Okay. But what about the other party members in the NDP? Well, some of them say, "It shouldn't be 50%, Mr. Bisson; it should be 75%." In fact, there is one member in your party who says, "Let's have 100%." I have the quote here. He says every penny should be paid and used in Ontario. That's 100%. So that's very good. I don't know what your position will be in the end, but I assume this is the bill, and we'll talk about that in the specific section. So I don't know how this is going to work out.

I just want to remind you of one thing, and that is Mr. Chudleigh's point about the Conservatives too. Laurie Scott made an interesting point. She supports you 100%. Then the member from Halton, Mr. Chudleigh, says, "You know what, we should be considering protectionism. This is wrong." So I don't know where the Conservatives are on this. Are you going to be in support of this bill by Mr. Bisson or are you going to be against the bill? You cannot, as Conservatives, speak out of two sides of the same mouth.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Liberals do this all the time. What are you getting at?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: You can't do that. You need one position.

Now, not only do we catch the NDP talking about 100% versus 50%, but we've got Conservatives saying, "This is right," and another one who says, "This is wrong." In other words, it's kind of tough to find out what the position is. I understand why this is difficult. I understand why this is complicated.

1150

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm advised by the member for Ajax-Pickering that we are joined by students from the Bolton C. Falby school in Ajax. Welcome.

Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to speak in support of this bill by the member from Timmins-James Bay, but first of all I wanted to explore some of the excuses that have been offered up for not supporting this bill. No one has quite come out and said it, but some have tried to imply, either in the House or in the media, that this kind of bill would be in breach of trade obligations. Let's be clear: This is not in breach of NAFTA; it's not in breach of the World Trade Organization. The reason that the United States has such a successful "buy America" policy is because NAFTA specifically provides for this. The reason that jurisdictions in Europe follow a similar policy—in Germany, in France, in Belgium—is because world trade agreements provide for this kind of legislation. It is well accepted by trade rules in the world today that jurisdictions can leverage public expenditure to benefit manufacturing jobs within the jurisdiction. That's all that this legislation proposes.

The second thing that has been offered up, sometimes in the House and sometimes in the media, is that this would somehow compromise Ontario's capacity to sell to other markets. I simply want to point out that Quebec, through a very similar preferential system, gave Bombardier the contract to build in the range of \$386 million of subway rolling stock for the Montreal subway. If I listen to what some of the government members say, they say that this would somehow prejudice Bombardier's capacity to sell elsewhere in the world. But Bombardier is winning transit contracts in Britain, is winning transit contracts in Turkey, is winning transit contracts in Germany and is winning contracts all over western Europe and many other countries. So I would say to government members who want to offer up the excuse that somehow if you did this, it would negatively impact your capacity to sell elsewhere in the world—not so. Bombardier is a beneficiary of this kind of beneficial policy in Quebec and Bombardier has no trouble selling transit vehicles virtually everywhere else in the world.

What this is about—and let's be clear—is that we all recognize that urbanized societies, for a variety of reasons, are going to have to invest billions of dollars, not only in urban transit but in intercity transit in the coming years. Thoughtful jurisdictions, recognizing this, are putting in place buy-domestic policies so that they can use that expenditure to leverage the creation of manufacturing jobs in their own jurisdictions.

That is why you can go to the Bombardier plant in Thunder Bay today and see the shells of streetcars being built, but once the shells are built, they're shipped to a plant in the United States where all of the finishing work is done—billions of dollars of finishing work and hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs, because that's what the Buy America policy requires.

We're simply saying that this works well in many other jurisdictions, that it does not contravene any trade laws, and if we care about sustaining manufacturing jobs in Ontario, we ought to do it here—now. Ontario did have a Buy Ontario policy until 2005, until the McGuinty government did away with it. That was a mistake. That mistake needs to be rectified, and it needs to be rectified now with the passage of this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. I am advised by the member from Mississauga-Erindale that in the visitors' west gallery, we have with us visitors from Palestine House from the riding of Mississauga-Erindale. Welcome.

Mr. Bisson, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank those members who took the time to participate in this debate. I'm looking forward to the support of all members of the House, from all sides, because I think we all understand the importance of making sure that dollars that are spent from the public purse are utilized in the best possible way when it comes to creating jobs.

I want to remind people that my bill is no different from a bill introduced by another member from the Legislature, Bill 216, the Buy in Canada for Mass Transit Vehicles Act, that was introduced—the same bill.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My bill says the same thing. The bill that I introduced is virtually the same bill as Mr. Mauro's, so I look forward to having the support of Mr. Mauro and the rest of the Liberal caucus. At the time they thought it was a good bill, and I look forward to them thinking that this would be equally as good a bill as well.

We need to send this into committee. I agree that we may want to take a look at some amendments to the bill, but the principle is one that has to be maintained.

The leader of the New Democratic Party, Mr. Hampton, my leader, pointed out, quite rightfully so, that all jurisdictions in North America—the United States, Mexico and Central America—and jurisdictions in Europe such as England, France, Germany, Belgium and others, have similar provisions when it comes to laws in their own countries, because they understand that if you're going to take public dollars, you should have some net benefit impact when it comes to employment within your own jurisdiction. So for the Liberal government to say, "We don't want to support this," I think that says a very simple thing: that the Liberal government doesn't support the creation of jobs in Ontario when it comes to making sure that public expenditures—if you do vote against it, you're basically saying that you don't believe in the creation of jobs as a result of expenditures in the province of Ontario on mass transit.

So I'm looking forward to the support of the members across the way and on this side of the House and to the moment that we have this bill in committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

We will first deal with ballot item 5, standing in the name of Ms. Broten.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY REPORTING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE DEVOIR DE SIGNALER LES CAS DE PORNOGRAPHIE JUVÉNILE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Broten has moved second reading of Bill 37. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Broten.

Ms. Laurel C. Broten: I'd ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Broten has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

We shall now deal with ballot item 6, standing in the name of Mr. Bisson.

CANADIAN MASS TRANSIT VEHICLES ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES VÉHICULES DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN CANADIENS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 31. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This is will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1204.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Dunlop, Garfield
Gélinas, France

Hampton, Howard
Hardeman, Ernie
Horwath, Andrea
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe

Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Mitchell, Carol
Moridi, Reza
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry

Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 20; the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the Chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1208 to 1330.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Richmond Hill, to introduce the members of the Iranian community who have come from across the greater Toronto area to celebrate Nowruz with us. We welcome you to Queen's Park today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WATER MANAGEMENT

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: In the very near future, the International Joint Commission will be making a decision on a water level management plan for Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. As you know, the St. Lawrence stretches along the complete southern border of my riding, from Cardinal in the east to just past Gananoque to the west. It also includes the bulk of the Thousand Islands, a recreational paradise and tourism magnet.

This past summer and fall, we experienced the lowest water levels in memory, and the upcoming decision by the International Joint Commission, expected later this month, is critically important to the environmental and economic well-being of this treasured waterway.

This week I wrote to the Right Honourable Herb Gray, Canadian co-chair of the International Joint Commission. I joined with New York State Congressman John McHugh in calling on the commission to select Plan B+, a plan that strives to return the Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence system to a more natural regime and begin to reverse the ecosystem damage that has occurred over the

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

past 50 years. The binational Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study Board recommended Plan B+ following a five-year study and a scientific review. I strongly urge its selection.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Kim Craiton: This is Black History Month. Many people in this province are not aware of the role the Niagara black community played in the great civil rights movement in North America in the 1950s and 1960s. In fact, the founding meeting of the NAACP was held in Fort Erie in 1905, and its leadership was derived from the Niagara Movement.

I'd like to bring to the attention of the House and the people of Ontario an exceptional woman of accomplishment who is helping us understand the importance of the black community's legacy to our area. I speak of Wilma Morrison, who last month received the Ontario Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for her lifetime of work in educating the public on local African Canadian heritage and culture, genealogy, and Niagara's connection to the Underground Railroad that allowed American slaves the chance to escape and start a new life.

Wilma is extremely modest about the accolades that have been heaped upon her and often tells me, "I'm sort of riding on the coattails of so many people who have done so many wonderful things." Wilma says, "I always wanted to celebrate our ancestors because they went through unspeakable horrors to make sure that things were better for me." Wilma maintains, "It is my responsibility to remind our young people of the story."

In Niagara Falls, it is Wilma who has provided the coattails on which future generations will ride to ensure the story is told. And finally, Niagara, Ontario and this world are much better places thanks to Wilma Morrison.

ALLISTON HORNETS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to pay tribute to the Alliston Hornets of the Georgian Bay Mid-Ontario Hockey League, who on Sunday night, in front of a packed house at the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre, displayed incredible poise and skill, defeating their rivals, the Penetang Kings, 7-2 in the fifth game of a seven-game series to win the mid-Ontario championship. Winning the title at home capped off a season that saw the Hornets lose only three out of 42 games and marked the team's first league title in 24 years.

As a native of Alliston, I know the Hornets have a proud history in Simcoe county. Founded in 1971, the Hornets have launched the careers of NHLers such as Manny Legace, John Madden and the brothers Darrin and Darryl Shannon. Over the last four years, the Hornets have won 105 games while losing just 27—an amazing accomplishment, to say the least.

The championship means that the Hornets now go to compete for the Schmalz Cup against either the Walker-

ton Hawks or the Kincardine Bulldogs. Residents of Alliston and, in fact, everyone can catch the games live on 95.5 FM or at the home of the Hornets, the New Tecumseth Recreation Centre.

I want to congratulate manager Rick Bartlett, coach Darrin Shannon, his staff and all the players for their hard work and determination this season. On behalf of the residents of Alliston and area, I want to wish them all the best as they compete for the all-Ontario junior C championship.

UNION REPRESENTATION

Mr. Paul Miller: Yesterday was a historic day in Hamilton and, in fact, all of Ontario. The United Steelworkers worked with ArcelorMittal Dofasco management to develop a unique neutrality process that allows workers to be free from any interference from Dofasco management to consider whether they want the United Steelworkers to act on their behalf and to negotiate a collective agreement on their behalf. This is a very novel approach that should be offered to all workers in this province, where they can freely exercise their democratic right to determine if they want to belong to a union.

As a member of the United Steelworkers for 32 years, I'm extremely proud of the efforts of my brothers and sisters in developing this new process. In fact, I believe that this process should be the only way that certification is done in Ontario and in Canada. Ontario's current laws do not do the job.

I want to also congratulate Jürgen Schachler, president and CEO of ArcelorMittal Dofasco, for leading his management team to this historic agreement. He said that this "first of its kind in Canada" process is geared to allow for "clarity, transparency and democratic principles to guide the decision-making of our employees."

I know that I also speak on behalf of my Hamilton NDP colleague MPP Andrea Horwath in our congratulations to our United Steelworkers brothers and sisters and to ArcelorMittal Dofasco for showing leadership on both sides of the bargaining table.

JAMES BIRRELL

Mr. Jeff Leal: In November 2007, the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto named a cancer research lab in honour of eight-year-old James Birrell, a boy who lost his battle with neuroblastoma cancer in December 2001. The James family has raised over \$2 million to fund neuroblastoma research at Sick Kids. The James Fund was established to provide dollars for the much-needed research. Neuroblastoma accounts for nearly 10% of all childhood cancers. The \$2 million is funding 10 research projects, five full-time research salaries and 17 articles published in this field.

James shared a special relationship with Tom Hanks after his role in Apollo 13, a role James took great delight in watching and discussing with Mr. Hanks. In November 2003, Tom Hanks chose the James Birrell neuro-

blastoma research fund of Peterborough, Ontario, as his charity of choice; and at Disney's 75th birthday for Mickey Mouse, a six-foot-tall "space mouse" was dedicated to James by Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company.

If I had the time, I could go on about the accomplishments of this young man and his family in their quest to raise research funds to help children with cancer.

I will close with a quote from Dr. Kaplan, senior scientist at the Hospital for Sick Children: "James has effectively left his tiny footprint in the vast world of research in this country, and that is an immensely powerful legacy to leave."

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today I would like to rise in the House to talk about numbers. However, I will not be talking in verse.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Another one will be coming.

A lot of numbers are thrown around in this House, and they can often be misleading. For instance, the Premier likes to say the number 450,000. That's how many jobs have been created under his watch, he claims. However, a closer look at the numbers within the numbers reveals other truths. Nearly half of these jobs were created in the public sector, and while there is no such thing as a bad job, a robust, flexible and growing economy demands significant investment in the private sector. In its first four years, this Liberal government has created only 160,000 private sector jobs. Compare that with the 372,000 private sector jobs created in the first four years of the Harris government. These numbers reveal that, given a similar trajectory, the Premier and his cabinet have cost Ontario 200,000 private sector jobs.

The number 200,000 should also sound familiar. That's the number of manufacturing jobs lost since 2005. I find it hard to think that this is a coincidence. So in effect, the Premier has not made any gains in job creation at all; quite the opposite. While business and service stay at par, manufacturing has tanked.

All of these numbers illustrate the immediate need for economic action by this government. If they continue to do nothing, we will soon be looking at zeros across the board.

1340

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Charles Sousa: As we head into the Easter holiday weekend, I know I am not the only one here in the House who is looking forward to spending time with my family. This weekend provides a welcome respite for many families before the snow melts and we head into the spring.

This government can say with pride and confidence that when we make policies or develop initiatives, the needs of families are our top priority. We have been

making Ontario a better place for families. We continue to make our education system better, which means more of Ontario's children will flourish and succeed. We continue to make our health care system better so that our families can take heart in knowing that their loved ones are being well taken care of. We are making strides in our protection of the environment, ensuring that we leave our children with a cleaner and greener environment.

I think we can say that Ontario's first Family Day was a success. We saw and heard many stories from across Ontario of families having a great day out skating, going to the museum and simply just enjoying each other's company.

I wish all of my colleagues on both sides of the House and all Ontarians a safe and happy Easter weekend.

MEMBER'S FAMILY

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: This Saturday marks the 60th anniversary of the day that my parents arrived at pier 21 in Halifax in 1948. Joe and Josie Thuss were married only days before they boarded the Kota Inten, which was a World War II troopship that had been pressed into further service as an immigrant transport between the Netherlands and Canada. Women and children at one end and men at the other, everyone slept in hammocks as 702 passengers spent two weeks on the choppy March seas of the Atlantic.

The newlyweds traveled by train from Halifax to Wheatley, where they started their new life in Canada as farm labourers. Their involvement in agriculture continued as they went on to become farmers in their own right and finally farm equipment dealers in the Parkhill area of Middlesex county.

They were among the many postwar immigrants who made the difficult decision to leave their families in Europe as they looked to Canada and Ontario as their opportunity to start a new life for themselves. All of them contributed to their new country through their hard work and family values as their way of supporting the community that had welcomed them.

My parents raised 10 children, of which I am the oldest, 41 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren. My dad passed away in 2001, but my mother still lives in Forest and in the heart of her children.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Nowruz. Happy Nowruz.

Nowruz is a celebration of the spring equinox and usually occurs on March 21 or the previous or following day, depending on where it is observed. Nowruz is commonly perceived as the most Iranian of all celebrations. It has been celebrated by all the major cultures of ancient Mesopotamia such as the Sumerians, Babylonians and Elamites. Nowruz is widely celebrated in various central Asian countries such as Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and in part of Turkey, Pakistan,

India, China, and in the Kurdish regions of Iraq and Syria. The Baha'i and Ismaili Shia Muslims, who trace their origin to Iran, also celebrate Nowruz.

Nowruz, with its uniquely Iranian characteristics, has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years and is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Zoroastrian belief system. Nowruz is also the natural rebirth of nature and, despite its Iranian characteristics, can be celebrated by all the people in the world. About 200,000 Ontarians from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds celebrate Nowruz every year.

Happy Nowruz.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Once again on behalf of all members, welcome to the Ontario Legislature today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Mrs. Savoline moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: The bill amends the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to extend the prohibition against smoking tobacco in any enclosed public space, any enclosed workplace or other places, such as schools, to include the prohibition against smoking any controlled substance, as set out in the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (Canada), in that place or within 10 feet of that place.

The bill is intended to stop the smoking of marijuana for medicinal purposes in public places or within 10 feet of public places.

GREAT LAKES SHORELINE RIGHT OF PASSAGE ACT, 2008 LOI DE 2008 SUR LE DROIT DE PASSAGE SUR LE LITTORAL DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Craiton moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to create a right of passage along the shoreline of the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 43, Loi créant un droit de passage le long du littoral des Grands Lacs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Kim Craiton: The Great Lakes Shoreline Right of Passage Act recognizes that it is time for the people of Ontario to reclaim their traditional rights of passage along the shores of the Great Lakes between the high-water mark and the existing shoreline, a right that exists in British common law, which still governs this country and province, a right I wish to emphasize through this legislation.

The bill does not attempt to write any new legislation or preclude any existing legal rights. The bill limits the right of passage along the shorelines of the Great Lakes to people on foot only. Adjacent landowners would still retain their right of access to the Great Lakes and their right to build docks and wharfs where permitted by law. It will preclude adjacent landowners from placing fences to bar the public's right of way.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Michael Chan: On the eve of International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I am honoured to stand in the House today to talk about racial discrimination.

Forty years ago tomorrow, 69 demonstrators were shot and killed in the Sharpeville massacre of South Africa during a non-violent protest against apartheid. Each year, the United Nations marks this anniversary by drawing special attention to the continued fight against all forms of racial discrimination.

In Ontario, we mark the day further with a renewed commitment to equality, opportunity and respect for all the people of our province and recognition that it is many cultures that make our province one of the best places in the world to live.

1350

Ontario's diversity is renowned. Our people come from 200 countries and speak more than 130 languages. We welcome about 130,000 newcomers from around the globe every year. It is one of the great achievements of Ontario that so many individuals, in all their backgrounds, have come together and chosen to live in peace and harmony.

Our government is proud to foster this acceptance of each other. We do this in many ways. We have invested in Ontario's community builders program, to support community projects that share our rich heritage and diversity. We created the Newcomer Champion Awards

as a means to recognize individuals who exemplify excellence or achievement in establishing welcoming communities, who foster understanding and sharing of our many cultures and traditions. Last year, we invested \$1 million to mark the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in the British Empire. Our government recognized this bicentenary as an opportunity to raise awareness of that little-known part of our history—the fact that slavery existed in Ontario—to recognize the struggle of African Canadians and to honour the spirit of those who fought for freedom, justice and equality.

Mr. Speaker, much as we are proud of our diversity, and rightly so, we also know that some people treat others with hatred and prejudice for no other reason than race or the colour of their skin. We know racism exists, but we must keep moving forward towards a fully just and equal society. We cannot, and must not, tolerate racism or discrimination anywhere in this province. We want to ensure that no Ontarian is victimized by racism. But keeping racism and discrimination from making our society toxic is the work of all of us.

On this day, I ask all Ontarians to stand up and speak out whenever they see discrimination, to challenge it whenever it occurs. It's up to us to do our part to ensure that the acceptance, fairness and respect that every person deserves is given to every Ontarian.

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais souhaiter à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes une excellente Journée internationale de la francophonie, célébrée chaque année le 20 mars par les francophones de tous les continents.

L'Ontario participe à la fête. Partout dans notre province, une foule d'activités souligne cette journée hautement symbolique. Ces célébrations font foi du dynamisme des collectivités francophones de l'Ontario.

Pour se maintenir, cette vitalité doit s'appuyer sur l'énergie et l'enthousiasme de la jeunesse. La jeunesse est présentement l'un des plus grands défis de toute la francophonie ontarienne et canadienne. L'engagement des jeunes est essentiel pour faire rimer francophonie ontarienne avec modernité.

Mais en même temps, nous ne pouvons pas demander aux jeunes d'assumer plus de leadership si le gouvernement ne fait pas lui aussi preuve de leadership.

Le 1^{er} mars dernier, j'ai annoncé que notre gouvernement allait créer une Stratégie jeunesse qui sera élaborée et mise en œuvre par l'Office des affaires francophones. Cette Stratégie jeunesse aura pour mission de mobiliser la jeunesse franco-ontarienne et d'assurer sa participation à l'épanouissement de nos collectivités francophones.

Le premier ministre McGuinty et moi-même avons d'ailleurs eu le plaisir de remettre hier soir les Prix de la francophonie de l'Ontario, édition 2008, à deux lauréats qui travaillent de très près avec la jeunesse.

Chaleureuses félicitations à M. Robert-Guy Despatie, animateur culturel au Conseil scolaire de district cathol-

ique Centre-Sud, qui a reçu le prix du francophone, et à M. Chad Gaffield, président du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, qui a reçu le prix du francophile. M. Despatie est parmi nous aujourd'hui dans la galerie et je suis très heureuse de le saluer.

En plus de son travail au conseil scolaire, Robert-Guy est aussi président de Réseau Ontario, un important réseau franco-ontarien de diffusion des arts de la scène, et participe activement aux activités de nombreux autres organismes francophones. Le gouvernement de l'Ontario lui a remis la Médaille du mérite civique en janvier 2008. Félicitations.

Avant sa nomination comme président du Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, Chad Gaffield a mené pendant 20 ans une brillante carrière d'enseignant, de chercheur et d'administrateur à l'Université d'Ottawa. Parfaitement bilingue, Chad Gaffield a toujours travaillé dans les deux langues officielles et a consacré une partie importante de sa carrière universitaire à l'étude de la présence française en Ontario.

L'Ontario a une myriade de raisons de célébrer la Journée internationale de la francophonie. Si nous devons nous fixer un objectif aujourd'hui, que ce soit de trouver des façons de motiver, d'inspirer et de valoriser nos jeunes francophones pour qu'ils soient fiers de faire partie d'une communauté dynamique à laquelle ils ont envie de s'identifier, une communauté francophone qui fait partie intégrante de la grande famille ontarienne.

Je souhaite à tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes une excellente Journée de la francophonie.

WORLD WATER DAY

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm pleased to speak to the members of this House today about an important global initiative for the environment and for human health. This Saturday, March 22, is World Water Day, an international day of action that grew out of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Clean, safe water is essential for life. Water is a critical factor in raising people out of poverty, for preventing disease, for sustainable development and for a healthy environment. Here in Ontario, it's sometimes easy for us to forget how such a basic requirement can be out of reach of so many people worldwide. Yet in so many places around the world, the lack of drinkable water is a constant reality. Each year, millions of people, many of them children, die from water-related disease. The World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all sickness in the world is caused by unsafe water and sanitation. Every day, women around the world spend many hours collecting water from distant and often polluted sources. This lack of clean water and adequate sanitation affects so many areas of life socially and economically, and most dramatically, of course, people's health.

Protecting and sustaining our water has been a hallmark of this government since the beginning. From protecting drinking water to better protections for the Great Lakes and penalties for companies that spill, we've gone

through a historic transformation on how we protect water in this province. We have passed the Clean Water Act and implemented all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations on Walkerton, ensuring our drinking water is protected from source to tap.

Right now, 38 source protection committees around the province are meeting regularly to begin the process of water source protection planning. That's over 300 people working locally to ensure that our drinking water is protected now and in the future. This government has invested \$120 million in this process to date.

We are very serious about improving and protecting our water, but we can't do it alone. We have many partners—municipalities, conservation authorities, environmental organizations and grassroots community groups, along with different governments—helping us get this important work done. We are working with the federal government, Quebec and neighbouring US states to better manage and conserve our shared Great Lakes waters.

Now we are moving forward with better protections for Lake Simcoe. In the face of climate change, pressures on water are going to continue to grow. That's why we have an aggressive and integrated approach to tackling climate change in Ontario, including the establishment of an expert panel to advise us on how climate change adaptation will take place.

Our supply of fresh water is one of the great advantages we have in Ontario, but it's not an infinite source. We must be diligent in protecting and sustaining our water and we must never take it for granted. Practising conservation, whether it's at home or in our businesses, will be the single most important action we can take, each and every one of us, to ensure that our children and grandchildren have a clean, strong and healthy place to live and grow in the future. I encourage all Ontarians to mark World Water Day on March 22—this Saturday—with their own pledge to help conserve and preserve our water.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

1400

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus concerning the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day is observed annually on March 21. On that day in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid pass laws in Sharpeville, South Africa. Pass laws were designed to severely limit the movement of, and to segregate, the non-white population of South Africa.

In 1966, the United Nations declared March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,

to commemorate the Sharpeville massacre. It's a day observed around the world to focus attention on the problems of racism and the need to promote racial harmony.

I had the opportunity to visit South Africa several years ago with my family. We travelled to Robben Island, a few kilometres off the coast of Cape Town. We toured the prison where Nelson Mandela was held captive for many years, saw the cell in which he was held, saw the conditions under which he lived and heard the stories from the guides, all of whom are former prisoners. They told us how incoming prisoners were divided into one of three groups—black, coloured or white—upon their arrival. The colour of your skin dictated the treatment you could expect to receive in descending order from white to black. Signs were posted everywhere setting out prohibitions for non-white prisoners.

Even though I had grown up hearing about the evils of apartheid, I was unprepared for the effect this place had on me, and it was even more profound for my children, who were perplexed by what they saw. They simply couldn't imagine that such a situation had ever existed, much less during my lifetime.

Thankfully, the world has changed a lot in the 30 years since Nelson Mandela was released and he and Bishop Desmond Tutu went on to establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which brought about a peaceful end to apartheid. Yet, we cannot become complacent. Racial discrimination in many countries, including Canada, is insidious. It affects our communities and workplaces, and it's estimated that a third of the cases that go before the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario are based on grounds of race and colour.

Clearly, there's much yet to do, and each one of us has a part to play. In the words of Robert F. Kennedy, "It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Welcome to the upcoming World Water Day and its focus on sanitation. Our Environmental Commissioner has concern with a number of potentially dangerous chemicals from soap, shampoo and pharmaceuticals in our water.

Two years ago, Commissioner Miller targeted runoff containing chemicals used on farms, antibiotics and medications poured down the toilet or sink, medications found in human waste, and runoff containing antibacterial soap and shampoo. The problem is that sewage treatment plants are not equipped to get rid of these products.

I mention this in the wake of concerns in a report, commissioned by the International Joint Commission, indicating that our Great Lakes communities are showing abnormally high rates of cancer mortality, elevated rates of infant mortality, premature deaths and low birth rates. This report had been withheld from public hearing and was released just last week. It looks at 25 areas of concern in the Great Lakes Basin. Ontario is home to four of the five Great Lakes, and it is incumbent on this government to get a handle on this and respond to the causes of some of these troubling findings.

In the meantime, I also draw this House's attention to a recent affront to the democratic process, in the rejection of two landowners from the Mississippi-Rideau Source Protection Committee. Both Merle Bowes and Terry Hale were voted to the positions by local OFA members. We're also told that John Vanderburgt has been rejected by Huron county's Ausable Bayfield Maitland Valley Source Protection Committee. We ask that this government take a look at that.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would also like to take this opportunity on behalf of the PC caucus to acknowledge the International Week of the francophonie. This week is celebrated annually in over 50 countries. It is a week when Canadians honour the French language and culture and the unique role played by the francophone community in our country.

Today's date commemorates the signing of the Treaty of Niamey in Nigeria in 1970. This year's Canadian theme for the week of the Francophonie celebrates the francophone culture and its strong presence in generation after generation.

JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Moi aussi, j'aimerais souligner la Journée internationale de la francophonie.

J'aimerais commencer par remercier mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative. Je sais que pour certains c'est un effort de parler en français, mais ils font l'effort, et ça, je l'apprécie parce que cela envoie un signal fort à la jeunesse, comme madame la ministre l'a mentionné, pour encourager nos jeunes et développer le leadership. Donc, c'est quelque chose que l'on apprécie beaucoup.

J'aimerais également souligner les activités du Centre de santé communautaire de Sudbury pour souligner la Journée internationale de la francophonie. Ils ont organisé un dîner typiquement francophone. Typiquement français, ça veut dire qu'il y aura du sucre à la crème et puis de la tarte au sucre, mais il y aura bien d'autres affaires également. Ils ont organisé un concours pour identifier les drapeaux francophones des différentes provinces. Chacun de vous, vous pourrez aller sur le site internet et vérifier si vous les connaissez. J'espère au

moins que vous allez reconnaître le drapeau franco-ontarien, qui lui a été fait—je suis fière de le dire—à Sudbury.

Par contre, il y a toujours des ombres au tableau, puis je ne peux pas m'empêcher de commenter que cette semaine, mardi, lorsque l'Association des centres de santé communautaires était ici, monsieur le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée nous a annoncé clairement qu'il n'y aura pas de nouveaux centres de santé. Il y a des communautés francophones en Ontario qui attendent depuis plus de 10 ans pour avoir un centre de santé francophone. On connaît l'importance d'un centre de santé francophone pour l'épanouissement de la francophonie dans ces communautés-là, et ça, c'est un manque de leadership.

En dernier lieu, j'aimerais inviter tout le monde à La Nuit sur l'étang le 24 mars à Sudbury et, comme on dit par chez nous, passons la nuit ensemble.

WORLD WATER DAY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address two of the statements that have been made today. First of all, international water day: I appreciate Minister Gerretsen speaking to the numerous elements that we have to take into consideration when we look at this issue, but in particular, I want to note his comments about the impact of climate change on water availability and water supply. The simple reality—and everyone in this chamber is aware of it; I'm certain that the minister is—is that climate change will reduce the availability of fresh water in the interior of continents all around the world. In fact, it already is having an impact in Darfur. The United Nations is referring to the war in Darfur as the first climate change war. It's a simple reality. What we do here when we don't act on climate change has an impact in other parts of the world, not just here.

Just recently, not reported widely in Canada but reported in the European press, the proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences noted that the South Asian monsoon is on the verge of being destabilized. Hundreds of millions of people depend on a regular supply of rain for the food that they eat. That is being destabilized, and longer term, the monsoons that supply west Africa are being destabilized.

The European Union this week is putting out a statement about climate change and security and the impact that it will have on the Middle East: predictions of a 60% drop in the availability of water for Israel.

Having said all that, I say to the minister sitting there: You have not brought a climate change plan forward to this Legislature for review. You have not brought legislation forward as promised by the Premier. You have not started to take the action that has to happen. So when you speak about the impact of climate change on water and you urge us to take a moral stand, when you urge us to actually take action, I come back to you and say: Where's the plan? Where's the legislation? Where's the budget?

1410

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I also want to address the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. I want to speak to Minister Chan. Minister Chan, as you're well aware, in Kawartha Lakes, in the Peterborough area, there is a trustee, a Mr. Gordon Gilchrist, who has written an overtly racist letter that was published in the local papers. In your commentary, you talked about the need to stand up and speak out against racism everywhere. I ask you, as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, to make yourself fully aware of the facts and then, Minister, condemn Mr. Gilchrist's comments, as you must, and join with many good citizens in that area who've called for the resignation of this trustee, who should not be left in a position of authority with regard to our children.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from London North Centre we'd like to welcome Mr. Ed Thompson and his children Owen and Aiden to the Legislature today. Welcome today to the Thompson family.

MEMBERS' ANNIVERSARIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of all members here in the Legislature I want to take this opportunity to recognize two members: the member from Leeds-Grenville and the member from Davenport, who have recently celebrated their anniversaries. Both were elected here on March 19, 1981, and they look as good today as they did in 1981. Congratulations.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We have a deferred vote on the amendment by Mr. Runciman to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1412 to 1417.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On December 4, 2007, Mr. Runciman moved that the motion of an address in reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

"However, the current speech from the throne fails to adequately address the state of our economy which is the single most important issue facing Ontario today; and

"Whereas since the beginning of 2005, Ontario has lost more than 153,000 manufacturing jobs; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to recognize that economic growth predictions for the province have shrunk by a full percentage point from predictions used by the government less than a year ago; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to indicate any sense of urgency for dealing with the economic challenges facing Ontario; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to provide a plan for dealing with this new economic reality by maintaining a program of unreasonable taxation and undisciplined spending; and

"Whereas the throne speech fails to set out a plan to reduce taxes and reduce regulations that are killing business in Ontario and placing such hardships on Ontario's families;

"We therefore regret to inform His Honour that the current Liberal government is ignoring the very real economic problems facing Ontario and has failed to ensure our economic fundamentals are sound and, in so failing, is failing to live up to the responsibilities placed on it by the people of Ontario."

All those in favour of Mr. Runciman's amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
MacLeod, Lisa
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those against, please rise.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Broten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic

Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldip
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Mondi, Reza
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 18; the nays are 69.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion lost.

On December 3, 2007, Ms. Pendergast moved, seconded by Mr. Ramsay, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

All those in favour of Ms. Pendergast's motion please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1423 to 1428.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour of Ms. Pendergast's motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Bryant, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Craitor, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob

Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Kular, Kuldeep
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Levac, Dave
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Smitherman, George
Sorbora, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed to the motion will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Annett, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Chudleigh, Ted
DiNovo, Cheri
Elliott, Christine
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie

Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
Hudak, Tim
Jones, Sylvia
Kormos, Peter
MacLeod, Lisa
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul

Munro, Julia
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael
Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Tabuns, Peter
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 61; the nays are 27.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is therefore resolved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable David C. Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session."

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. You recently appointed your parliamentary assistant, Mr. Ramsay, to look into ways of addressing what many would describe as a crisis in the province's manufacturing sector: over 194,000 jobs lost since July 2004. Can the Premier tell us if, in the lead-up to the budget, his parliamentary assistant has shared any of the feedback he has received, specifically from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce? If he has, is the Premier listening to him, and will we see the results in Tuesday's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, let me say how pleased I am with the work being done by our parliamentary assistant to help us tackle the manufacturing challenge in Ontario. He's had over 60 meetings.

I can tell the leader of the official opposition that our budget will in fact reflect both his findings and his recommendations. One of the things we keep hearing again and again has to do with the fact that we've got to find a way to turn a challenge into an opportunity. The CFIB—the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—tells us that last year there were 100,000 Ontario jobs that went begging for a period of at least four months. We have people in the manufacturing sector who are losing jobs, and we have these jobs that are going begging. What we need to do, and our budget will speak to this in a very realistic way—how we're going to create new training opportunities for folks who are losing their jobs so that they can take on these new jobs and move themselves and their families ahead.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I asked the Premier a very specific question, which he declined to respond to. If the Premier is actually listening to Mr. Ramsay and he is reporting back accurately, and I'm sure he does, he would know that the Ontario chamber surveyed its members to provide input to your PA's review, and he would know their response to this question: "What programs can the Ontario government implement that would provide assistance within the next 24 months?" I'm sure Mr. Ramsay would have told you the top response to that question: "Reduce corporate income taxes." We've heard from economists, other provincial

governments and even the leader of the federal Liberal Party that corporate tax cuts are needed to support our beleaguered manufacturing sector. Now the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is added to that list. Will the Premier heed their calls, or is Mr. Ramsay's assignment a meaningless exercise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to quote something that Len Crispino, who is head of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said in response to our fall economic statement. He said: "The elimination of the capital tax and other provisions are some immediate actions that will benefit companies. It will have a positive impact. Manufacturing and resource sectors will get significant relief."

That speaks to the support we've had from the business community. In addition to eliminating the capital tax entirely for the manufacturing and forestry sectors, the leader of the official opposition will also know we have been busy reducing the business education taxes; we've been busy accelerating the business writeoff for the capital cost allowance provisions; we have worked with a fellow government to harmonize a collection of corporate income taxes; and a number of other initiatives, all of which are designed specifically to help address tax burdens.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Regrettably, it sounds like Mr. Ramsay's assignment is little more than a make-work project, an attempt to placate a good member who never should have been dumped from your cabinet. His assignment is like the government's review of the health tax system: a sham; a public relations exercise.

If the Premier was listening, he would have heard the comments of the chair of the Greater Sudbury Chamber of Commerce—and I'm going to quote her: "Sixty per cent of the manufacturers surveyed would expect to see appreciable improvements to their competitiveness within two years should the Ontario government address regulation and taxation issues." When will the Premier heed their call?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The Conservative Party is coming up once again with the wrong diagnosis. Here are the issues. In the last 12 months, the price of oil has gone up by 80%. In the last two years, I think the dollar has appreciated by some 30%. We have in fact been cutting business taxes in the province of Ontario. The Conservatives believe that the problem lies in the fact that we have corporate income taxes that are at an unacceptable level.

The fact of the matter is, the price of oil has gone up, the value of the dollar has gone up and what we have in place are provisions to help those businesses which are in fact struggling. When you eliminate the capital tax for the manufacturing and resource sector, you are helping businesses that are struggling, that are not profitable. When you reduce business education taxes, you are helping businesses that are not profitable, businesses that are, in fact, struggling. Those are the kinds of things that we have done in concert with the Ontario business community. We will continue to work with them to ensure that they prosper here in our province.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: I have a question to the Premier: Under your watch, since July 2004, Ontario has lost more than 194,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs. The Premier knows that a recent Toronto-Dominion report says that ain't nothing yet, that another 250,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs could leave in the next five years. Ontario's private sector job creation is, Premier, dead last in all of Canada. It doesn't have to be that way. We are a province of tremendous talent and entrepreneurial spirit and great potential, suffering under your outdated high tax and runaway policies.

Premier, please tell us that on budget day, Tuesday, you're going to reverse this policy and finally reduce the tax and red tape burden on businesses and working families.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It may be that the honourable members opposite have forgotten what happened when they were in government, but I can tell you Ontarians have not.

When they proceeded to cut taxes in a reckless and thoughtless manner, they closed our hospitals, they fired our nurses, they made cuts to our schools, they declared war on our teachers, they fired our water inspectors and they saddled us with a \$5.6-billion deficit. That's what happens when you recklessly and thoughtlessly pursue a tax cut ideology.

1440

We have a balanced, thoughtful, responsible, five-point plan. We're reducing business taxes, investing in skills and education, supporting innovation, investing in infrastructure and partnering with the Ontario business sector. That's how you grow the economy. That's why we have 450,000 net new jobs in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier says, "Grow the economy." Give me a break. Some 70,000 individuals have fled our province to go to other provinces to find work. You have the record of the lowest private sector job creation in all of Confederation, some 194,000 families now without work from well-paying manufacturing jobs, because of your outdated high tax and runaway policies. The Premier well knows that even his federal leader, Stéphane Dion, sees the wisdom of competitiveness when it comes to tax rates.

So I ask the Premier: After four budgets of high taxes, runaway spending and high energy rates will we finally see you admit you're on the wrong track, reverse course and give a break to working families and businesses, and create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're just going to have to agree to disagree. I see things differently, and I think Ontarians do, too. We had a bit of consultation recently. We called it a province-wide election. We put forward our different philosophies to the people of Ontario not that long ago. We asked Ontarians to pass judgment on us.

Again, what the Conservatives are asking us to do is to cut corporate income taxes—those are taxes on profitable

corporations—by \$2.3 billion. They want us to cut the health tax as well. So we're talking about a total of \$5.1 billion. That's what they're asking us to do—remove those revenues from the Ontario government. That definitely means closing hospitals, firing nurses, cutting education. It means driving up tuition fees. It means cutting the Ministry of the Environment and the like, and it means running a deficit.

Hon. George Smitherman: That's the Tory legacy.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's their legacy. That's what they did. That's what they left us. We will not pursue that particular tragic path.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier certainly does see things differently. He stands alone in Confederation today in advocating this outdated high tax and runaway policy. We've seen it in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec now, provinces that have leapt ahead of Ontario in economic growth and job creation. Dalton McGuinty's economic policies have taken a talented and entrepreneurial province and put us dead last in job growth and economic growth in all of Confederation. It was a while ago that Premier McGuinty himself actually said, "Tax cuts for businesses, we think that is an important thing," but obviously he has reversed course and reverted back to his high tax and runaway spending approach.

Ontario working families and small businesses cannot wait any longer. Will you admit your mistakes and announce in this upcoming budget that you will follow what the rest of the provinces are doing and make Ontario attractive again for new business investment?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Right now, Ontario provides 41.5% of federal revenues, and we receive 31% of federal spending. On a per capita basis, every Ontarian provides \$2,040 to the rest of the country, and we are proud to make that contribution to this country which we love.

For my colleague opposite, the honourable member, to bring this negativity, this sense of overwhelming pessimism, is to betray our history as a province. It is true we are into some choppy economic waters. We have encountered those kinds of waters in the past. We will encounter them today and triumph as well. It may be they want to cloak this entire issue with negativity and darkness on behalf of the people of Ontario. I see this with a great deal of optimism. We have found a way through these challenging times in the past, and we will find a way through this particular challenge once again.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The new double-decker GO Transit buses that were part of the Premier's photo op today, can the Premier tell us where these buses were manufactured and how much they cost?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I should, first of all, note that the station at which this was announced is a station where

there was a proposal for the extension of the subway to York University. I remember that on April 11, 2007, the member pledged in the NDP election platform to cancel the subway expansion: "We don't need another subway mega-project ... extending the subway line into a lightly populated York region." So that's the context of where the announcement took place.

The double-decker buses are made in Scotland because they're the only ones who make those double-decker buses. I will tell you, bi-level GO Transit cars are made in Thunder Bay and people buy them from all over the world.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The New Democrats believe in Buy Ontario. What we're seeing from the McGuinty Liberals is Sell Out Ontario. The McGuinty Liberals buy double-decker buses worth \$1 million apiece from Scotland at the same time that 200,000 Ontario workers have lost their manufacturing jobs, and this morning, while the Premier played with his latest British toys, McGuinty government members rejected a Buy Ontario policy.

I want to ask the Premier, how does the Premier justify this double slap in the face to manufacturing workers in Ontario who've lost their jobs?

Hon. James J. Bradley: He may not be aware of them, so let me share with the member the comments of Jayson Myers, president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters of Canada. Here's what he thinks about Ontario policy in this regard: "Canadian manufacturers and exporters who supply infrastructure projects need a globally competitive business environment. That starts with policies that provide them with a level playing field. Ontario has taken a step in the right direction...."

I tell the member from Rainy River, I tell the member who is the leader of the third party, that Ontario exports so many of its products that we're probably, amongst any jurisdiction in the world, the one that exports the most. We do not want to place those exports and the jobs that come with them in jeopardy through the kinds of policies that the leader of the third party happens to be—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I say to the McGuinty government, the United States exports literally billions of dollars' worth of manufactures to the rest of the world and they have a Buy America policy when it comes to transit equipment; and Germany exports literally billions of dollars of manufactures to the rest of world and they have a "buy domestic" policy when it comes to transit equipment to sustain the industry there; and the same with France and the same with Belgium. But what do we have in Ontario? On Tuesday, the Premier celebrates transit buses, most of the manufacture of which happened in the United States, and today the Premier celebrates buses that were manufactured in Scotland at \$1 million apiece.

Tell me, when is the McGuinty government going to celebrate manufactures most of which happen here in

Ontario for transit equipment? When are we going to see that, if ever?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member that in terms of transit contracts—and he would be aware that the largest single allocation of funding is going to go to Move Ontario 2020, some \$17.5 billion. We estimate that \$14.5 billion of this funding will be invested in engineering, design and construction of transit infrastructure; the lion's share of that is 95% of this \$14.5 billion spent in Ontario. I say to the member, on top of that, we will have those contracts which are won by very good bus-making companies and transit vehicle companies in the province of Ontario. They will do very well in that competition and they will be assisted by our policy of 25% Canadian content.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again, to the Premier, when he wants to celebrate buses that are made everywhere else in the world: In 2005, Ontario had a Buy Ontario policy and the McGuinty government abandoned it. Shortly after that, the city of Toronto, making a major subway purchase, sat down and looked at the options and said that, as a matter of economic development for Ontario, they made the decision to purchase subway cars made in Thunder Bay.

1450

Doesn't the McGuinty government think that that's a proper sphere for the McGuinty government to ensure that we create and sustain manufacturing jobs in places like Thunder Bay and Toronto? If it's good policy for Toronto city council, why isn't it good policy for the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I say to the leader of the third party, who keeps making reference to some policy that existed back in 1992 and expired in 1997, that he seems to think that this policy has been in effect over those years. That is in fact, as he knows, a policy that expired in 1997. He may make reference to a letter to the city of Ottawa, because they asked about that policy, and it was revealed to the city of Ottawa when they made an inquiry that it ended in 1997.

I noticed that the city of Toronto—which has a number of people of his political affiliation on it—the people who actually have to govern, make decisions and have to live with those decisions; they decided, as the government of Ontario has, that 25% content, after consultation with experts in the field, is what they would have in their next contract. That's what Ontario has decided, and I—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: What is on the record is that Toronto city council has acted to sustain and maintain manufacturing jobs in Ontario, while the McGuinty government is completely missing in action.

I want to draw the Premier's attention to recommendation 14(4)(1) in the report delivered by Robert Rosehart today, who was appointed by the government to look at sustaining manufacturing jobs. He says: "It is recommended that government procurement policies be pursued in the mass transit sector that support indigenous value-added content preferences and policies that are modeled after those of Ontario's major competitors." For example, Buy America in the United States, which requires 60% American content in a transit bus or streetcar.

My question is this: The Rosehart report is recommending a Buy Ontario policy; why is the McGuinty government at the same time turning its back on a Buy Ontario policy?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I say to the leader of the third party who raises this—as he should, as a leader of one of the opposition parties, and I understand that very much, but he must know that we have come forward with such a policy.

On balance, we looked very carefully at what the consequences might be. We could have played some games and said, "This much is 75%; that much is 35%," based on the fact that we already have a virtual cinch on the market in certain things. I mentioned the bi-level GO cars from Bombardier in Thunder Bay; they said 75% Canadian. They're going to be built there anyway, the ones that GO Transit wants. We didn't do that. We looked at a very balanced approach, as the city of Toronto looked at a balanced approach with the New Democrats who were there, and said, "What would be best for Ontario's exports and for our own products is 25% Canadian content."

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty government wants to pretend that somehow having a Buy Ontario policy would harm exports. It's certainly not true in Quebec and Bombardier as a preferential treatment in terms of Quebec and exports. It's certainly not true in terms of Bombardier exporting to the United States, Germany and to many other countries around the world.

Manufacturers, labour leaders, business leaders, political leaders all say that a 50% Canadian content level is sustainable. It would have no effect on our export ability. Now the person that you have appointed, Dr. Rosehart, says essentially the same thing. Why is everyone else in Ontario saying that we should match our competitors and have a Buy Ontario policy, and it's only the McGuinty government that celebrates buses that are made in the United States and buses that are made in Scotland and says no to a Buy Ontario policy?

Hon. James J. Bradley: When I look at the contract—the member wants to steer away from this, and I understand it; I spent a lot of time in opposition, and I know how opposition people think and the kinds of questions they ask. But I can tell you that in the contract I'm talking about, Move Ontario 2020, 82% of the spending will be for the province of Ontario. The province of Ontario will benefit. I know that companies that are in the manufacturing industries in Ontario are very, very good, and they win a lot of contracts because they are

very good and because they compare well in their price and in the kind of product they produce, and will continue to do so. The city of Toronto, at 25%, understands, we understand, that overwhelmingly, the jobs created by our transit projects in this province will remain in this province.

DEVELOPMENT FEES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: on November 30 last year, your government met with HDI, the Six Nations Haudenosaunee Development Institute. This is the group extorting fees from not only home builders but also municipalities. After your meeting, you and your government received a letter from HDI—this is according to the *National Post*—demanding a \$7,000 fee or else further talks would be prevented from occurring. Minister, you now have the evidence—you have it in writing—of extortion by HDI that we've been hearing about. Will your government be laying charges?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The member is asking whether or not the government is laying charges, and I would remind the member that the government doesn't lay charges. Police lay charges. If there was any doubt about that, the Ipperwash commission reminded everybody that it's police who lay charges.

As for the correspondence that the member is referring to, if he is suggesting that correspondence was sent to me along the lines he has just said, I'd appreciate him sending more information over to me, because I would require more information. What he is talking about is not something that squares with my understanding of any meetings and correspondence that have taken place with me in the past.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, letters were sent to your government—and your government is not the only government subject to the strong-arm demands of Aaron Detlor and HDI. Official plans for the city of Brantford, Brant county, Norfolk county, Haldimand county, East Luther Grand Valley and the city of Hamilton rural plan are all on hold. "All construction from roads to homes will be stopped if an Ontario ministry does not pay for [the] Haudenosaunee Development Institute review of the Haldimand county official plan." This is in the *Dunville Chronicle*. And this from Aaron Detlor: "Financial institutions ... will completely back away from any development." "If the minister refuses to pay, there will be repercussions," Detler said.

So there we have it, Minister: a public threat of repercussions. Will you investigate? Your government has received a letter from Aaron Detlor. When will you charge HDI with extortion?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I spoke today with the mayor of Brantford, and continue to speak with not only business people in the region, the mayor, the council and, obviously, MPP Dave Levac. He brought everybody into the same room, along with the Haudenosaunee Six Nations and band council members, to discuss ways in

which we can find a way for the Haudenosaunee Six Nations government and peoples and the local municipalities and communities to be working and living together. What the member is proposing, in my view, is going to further divide the communities.

In any event, he repeatedly calls upon the government to lay charges against individuals, and I remind him again that in fact it is for the government to engage in debate and pass policy; it is for the police of Ontario to retain their independence and lay charges as they see fit.

1500

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday in this House, the Minister of Health stated, "I'm pleased as well that we are moving toward the implementation of a regulation that will have the effect of establishing a much higher standard of care." We were talking about long-term-care homes. Will this higher standard be guaranteed, and will it be at a minimum of 3.5 hours of care per day?

Hon. George Smitherman: I can confirm that Shirlee Sharkey, the CEO of Saint Elizabeth Health Care, has been out consulting with a variety of stakeholders and will soon offer some advice to moving forward.

No, the standard will not be 3.5 hours. I want to tell the honourable member that the standard at present, the hours of services that we're providing, is 2.95, which stands in very sharp contrast to the 2.25 standard that was in place when the New Democratic Party was the government in the province of Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to address this: 2.95 is actually 2.85 and it is what is being paid. That includes things like maternity leave, statutory holidays, sick leave. That doesn't provide for much care. The actual care is more about 2.45 hours. In 1995, long-term-care homes did not do oxygen therapy; they did not do intravenous therapy; they did not do any of this. There was not the amount of Alzheimer clients that we see now. The client mix is so different that what happened in 1995 has very little bearing as to what's happening in 2008 in long-term-care homes.

Ontarians want to know: When will this government implement a guaranteed minimum standard of care?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do want to repeat to the honourable member that this government will not be bringing in a standard which says to the long-term-care home operators and to the front-line health care employees, "Pretend that every resident of the 77,000 in long-term care requires exactly the same care." We will not turn them into widgets, and we've been clear on that point.

I'm very privileged to have been in the position as part of this government to introduce 9.55-million annual hours of additional bedside care to date. Further, last September we increased by 36% our funding on the raw food per diem. Alongside this we've dramatically

enhanced compliance capabilities, and further, we have a piece of legislation that further enhances the expectations of the quality of care for our residents in long-term care.

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: To my Conservative friend who likes to heckle, I ask him: Why are you still in favour of a \$3-billion cut to health care?

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: A most tragic event has occurred in my community that has shaken the family and shaken all of us. It's another needless loss of life by handgun violence. I know the family affected personally. They are devastated. The community is devastated by this great loss. Would the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services please tell this House what steps our government is taking to protect Ontarians from this horrendous gun violence?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question and for supporting the family and the community affected by this very sad and tragic event. I would also encourage anyone with any information to come forward to the Toronto Police Service or to Crimestoppers and let them know what they know.

Our government believes in being tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, and that's why we invested \$68 million towards anti-guns-and-gang initiatives to give police and prosecutors the tools and resources they need. That's why we invested \$30 million in community programs to target at-risk youth. That's why we invested in 1,000 new police officers. That's why we believe that strategies like the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy will pay dividends. We continue to work with our police—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the community is very appreciative of the dedication of the men and women of the police services and the co-operation they are giving to the family especially and the hard work that's involved here. My question to the minister is, can he please tell the House what else we can do in continuing this fight against this horrendous gun crime that is plaguing our streets and our communities right across Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again my condolences, on behalf of Ontarians, to the families, the friends, all those affected by this and other tragic events, and my thanks to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence for his determined advocacy in this area.

We have moved as a government, Premier McGuinty and my predecessor Minister Bryant, to push the federal government to bring in mandatory minimums for gun crimes and reverse-onus bail for those charged with crime, for the protection of society. I'm pleased that that legislation has been passed, but we need more. We need

more in two specific areas. One of the issues is the smuggling of guns across the border. The federal government is in charge of the border. We need a federal government national plan for improved border security to stem the flow of guns across the border. The second area is a handgun ban. Join Ontarians in advocating a national ban on handguns. The federal government has to get serious and get the guns.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier. As you may know, Don Drummond, the chief economist at Toronto Dominion, recently said that Ontario is not so far from being an equalization province. The reason Mr. Drummond says that is because Ontario's per capita fiscal capacity has fallen from roughly \$400 above the equalization standard four years ago to merely \$84 above the average this past year.

Premier, clearly your outdated, failed economic policies are holding back our talented and resourceful province, to the point where we're on the verge of becoming a have-not province. Is that not signal enough that you need to reverse your high tax and runaway spending policies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: You'd think that if the Conservative Party was so wedded to the notion of a cut of corporate income taxes, they might have made some passing reference to that in their platform, but there's not a single mention of it to be found there. It's apparent that they're taking their cues from elsewhere these days.

As I said a moment ago, this year Ontario provides 41.5% of federal revenues and receives 31% of federal spending. On a per capita basis, that means each and every Ontarian is providing \$2,040 to the rest of the country, which clearly distinguishes us as not being a have-not province. What we don't have is fairness from the federal government, and in the ensuing supplementary I will be delighted to address that.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's extraordinary: Ontario is headed towards have-not status. We've seen a significant reduction in our per capita income from \$400 above that standard to barely treading water above the national standard. The Premier doesn't even respond to this notion, this danger of heading into equalization territory.

Let me tell you something else, Premier. In 2006, for the first time, Ontario's nominal GDP per capita fell below the Canadian average. Four years ago we were \$2,000 above that national average. In 2006, for the first time ever, we fell below that average. Please tell me that your goal, the lasting legacy of the Dalton McGuinty government, is not going to be taking Ontario to have-not status.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I see my honourable friends' lips moving, but I hear the federal Minister of Finance's voice speaking. All roads over there these days lead to Ottawa, apparently.

When they're taking their direct orders from Ottawa, I would ask the honourable members opposite to make a

few modest requests on behalf of Ontarians. First of all, I would ask them to speak up for Ontarians when it comes to fairness for our unemployed workers. Ontario workers who lose their jobs are getting on average \$4,000 less than had they been unemployed in other provinces. This is not a question of money for our government. All told, this would be \$2.1 billion annually that would go into the pockets of unemployed workers for things like groceries—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier. New question.

1510

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Premier. Earlier this week, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs told the media that he has “a good working relationship with Chief Donny Morris of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug.”

Well, let me you: Chief Morris is flabbergasted. Why? Because on January 11, when Chief Morris was in Toronto and tried to meet with the minister to talk about the Platinex situation, the minister wouldn't meet. He'd only talk for 10 minutes over the phone.

On January 17, when Chief Morris gave the minister a proposal from Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug to remedy the Platinex situation, the minister failed to respond, and in fact has never responded.

On March 5, Minister Bryant showed up at Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug unannounced—no discussion, no consultation—with a unilateral government document for the community to sign. Is this what the McGuinty government calls respectful consultation with First Nations? You don't respond to their proposal and then you demand they sign a unilateral—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am not sure there's anything to be found within the leader of the NDP's assertion with which I might agree. He is not fairly representing the activities of our Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

He is meeting with First Nations chiefs as we speak. He has been to KI every month this year, and he'll continue to meet with them in order to find new ways to work together. We understand it is a difficult situation. We understand that when it comes to these kinds of disputes, in many cases they predate Confederation. What we're trying to do is establish a new positive, progressive working relationship; hence the new ministry, hence a minister who takes complete responsibility for these kinds of things.

I cannot agree with my honourable friend opposite, in terms of his representation of the good work being done by my minister.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Well, as a result of the McGuinty government's so-called good work, the chiefs of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation have now cut off all com-

munications with the McGuinty government in regard to the northern table discussions.

Today, this is the press release from the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug:

“The Ontario emissary, Mr. Michael Bryant, came to our community and offered no formal agenda and plan for negotiations. There was no real substance for negotiations, despite what he said in a press release dated March 17, 2008, the day that our leaders were imprisoned.

“The Ontario emissary, Mr. Bryant, is indeed speaking fork-tongued. He is not formally talking to anyone at KI, as he professes.”

Let me tell you, Premier, that I know the people of Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug. They are very respectful, honest, decent people. For them to issue a press release that says that, tells me they are very angry—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Premier?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please respect the Chair, Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think we have close to 130 First Nations communities in the province of Ontario. From time to time, we will have differences. That is in keeping with human nature.

I think what we need to be able to do is work together and move forward in a measured and balanced way. That's why we've created a new ministry; that's why we have a minister with his own budget. We have managed, so far, to enter into a gaming agreement with the First Nations communities, which will translate into \$3 billion in new benefits for our First Nations communities. We have managed to put the Ipperwash issue behind us.

There are some outstanding issues, and I expect that more will appear on the landscape on a fairly regular basis. I think one of the most important things we all need to bring to the table is goodwill, and I know that goodwill is embodied in Minister Bryant.

CANCER SCREENING

Mr. Kim Craiton: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As a thankful—in fact, a very thankful—cancer survivor, I know that early detection and proper treatment of cancer is the only answer to this malignant disease.

Colorectal cancer is one of the only few cancers that is both common and highly preventable. In fact, strong evidence exists to show that by screening high-risk populations for the disease, we can reduce the number of people who die from this illness. However, on the average, about 3,250 Ontarians die from colorectal cancer and about 7,800 are newly diagnosed with the disease. It's the second-leading cause of cancer deaths in Ontario. Sadly, it doesn't need to be so.

Could the minister inform this House what the government is doing to reduce the impact of colorectal cancer?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I think we are all very proud to see how well he's doing. We're proud of the health care workers who support our Ontarians. Too many people in Ontario die from colorectal cancer; in fact, we have a very high rate of colorectal cancer death in our province, and we're doing something about it.

Last January, I had the privilege of announcing that Ontario would be the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement a colorectal cancer screening program. I'm very pleased to say that we're investing \$193 million over the next five years to dramatically enhance the rate of screening for Ontarians, focusing particularly on those over 50, starting in April, with a fecal occult blood test that will be widely available from primary care practitioners and indeed from pharmacists as well.

We know there is a good chance of saving lives in Ontario. We encourage people to become aware and for members in this Legislature to play a role in enhancing awareness of the necessity of screening for colorectal cancer in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Kim Craiton: My supplementary question as well is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This is an important initiative for constituents, mine, as well as everyone in this House and all of Ontario. Could the minister explain for this House and Ontarians how the government will get the message out about the program and make sure that as many Ontarians as possible take advantage of this preventive benefit that it has to offer?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the question. The good news is that if detected early, colorectal cancer has a 90% cure rate. Our ambition is to dramatically enhance the number of Ontarians who achieve such a successful circumstance.

To that end, we've launched a new public awareness campaign called Colon Cancer Check to educate Ontarians about early screening. People will soon see this campaign in the province of Ontario. We have a website, www.coloncancercheck.ca, but, importantly, because of the necessity of communicating about this matter with people in a variety of languages, we'll be running newspaper ads in 70 ethnocultural newspapers, 45 main dailies, and every one of the 23 television stations in the province of Ontario will be participating in running our campaign.

Coloncancercheck.ca fulfills the opportunity to save lives in the province of Ontario. We encourage all people, especially those over 50, to participate in this program and for others to encourage the ones you love to do so.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. The Public Appointments Secretariat, with which you work, has a mandate to ensure that the most qualified men and women, having the highest personal and professional integrity, serve the public on the province's agencies, boards and commissions.

On January 18, the Premier and cabinet signed off on the appointment of Sivam Vinayagamoorthy to the CCAC for Mississauga-Halton. Yesterday, at the government agencies committee, I requested a deferral of this appointment after it became very clear after questioning from myself and the MPP for Nickel Belt that this person was unqualified. He did not understand the role of a CCAC. He could not distinguish between home care and nursing homes and did not understand the basic health care issues in this province. Will the minister rescind the appointment, uphold the mandate of the secretariat and ensure that only qualified people get appointments?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: With all due respect, that question properly goes to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. George Smitherman: First off, I would like to say to the honourable member, as is the law, the rules in this place do allow for other parties to call forward members, and you had an opportunity to vote on that point.

I don't know all of the circumstances associated with the allegations that the honourable member makes. I assume that some of this is in the eye of the beholder, what is qualified and not. I can tell the honourable member that community care access centres play an incredibly important role, and they provide services to a very diverse group of the people of Ontario. It's our responsibility to make sure that the diversity of the province of Ontario is reflected on such boards. I would take with some caution any recommendation from the honourable member about who's qualified and who's not.

1520

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the Minister of Health's being able to answer everybody's questions over there, because that's what he's been doing all week. It doesn't say much about them. But on April 24, 1999, a then-opposition member said appointments should be removed from the Premier's office and instead should be decided by an administrative council. Apparently, things change once you're elected Premier, since it was he who signed off on this grossly inadequate appointment.

Not only is the appointee so obviously unqualified, but it is a blatant political patronage appointment. The appointee says, "I'm just an ordinary Liberal Party member," and he sure is. He's a GTA Liberal blogger, and according to Elections Ontario he donated \$3,817 to the Liberal Party. To top it all off, his reference for the job is none other than Harinder Takhar, the Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship, whose Liberal riding association this individual works on.

So my question, back to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, is to stop the pork barrelling, put some integrity back into the political appointment process, and withdraw this appointment.

Hon. George Smitherman: Some great patronage appointment is the privilege of serving on a community care access centre, where the per diem is zero. This is unpaid work.

It's important that home care, which is about delivering services into the home, include a culturally diverse, representative group. Like I said before, the issue of

qualification is something that the committee had an opportunity to consider, as is in keeping with the rules of this place. I dare say, in this Legislature and through the appointments that I'm privileged to recommend through the order-in-council process, that we're appointing people from all political stripes and from no political stripes at all, as we should continue to do in the privileged way that we have.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. My question is: When will the McGuinty government finally completely and utterly end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement from Ontario's poorest children?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This government is very serious about addressing child poverty, and we have shown it after the election when the Premier appointed my very capable colleague to chair the poverty reduction committee. This government has shown since we've been in power, and in a very sensitive manner, the importance of reducing poverty. We have done so by increasing social assistance three times, by 7%; we have done so by moving forward with the Ontario child benefit; and we have done so by increasing the minimum wage, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Michael Prue: Perhaps the minister needs to listen to the question again. The question was: When will you end the clawback of the national child benefit? That was the question. Your own Premier has said that it was a heinous practice by the previous government. Your own party has said you will end it. My question is very simple: When are you going to end that clawback, if ever? When are you going to do it? That's the question.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very proud to be part of the government that has been moving forward to reduce child poverty in this province. We have done a lot more in improving children's quality of life by introducing the Ontario child benefit.

The Ontario child benefit is helping a lot more children than this party wants us to do. This party wants us to help only those on social assistance. We have done a lot more than that. We are helping children of the working poor. We're also helping children whose parents are on social assistance, and we're moving forward with a dental plan that will also help children in poverty.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. Minister, as you know, for years Ontario's municipal infrastructure was neglected, and there's been a growing need to address this huge deficit. There are a number of infrastructure priorities in my own riding of Northumberland—Quinte West and indeed in municipalities across this province. What is this government doing to address the infrastructure challenges of Ontario's municipalities?

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member from Northumberland—Quinte West for the question, because I can tell you that our government takes infrastructure and infrastructure investments extremely seriously. We know that investing in our infrastructure means more jobs in the short term and greater economic vitality and viability over the long term.

That's why, in the recent fall economic statement, Minister Duncan announced the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, or what I call MIII, a \$300-million program to provide safe and reliable infrastructure for local priorities. We had an overwhelming response from municipalities, and that's why Premier McGuinty went to the OGRA/ROMA conference and announced an additional 50% enhancement to MIII, to bring our total investment to \$450 million.

The funding under MIII is just one initiative in the government's broader strategy to modernize Ontario's public infrastructure. Other programs include the successful rural infrastructure investment initiative, the OSIFA loan program, and of course COMRIF—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Minister, thank you for the update. I can tell you that the eight municipalities and the counties in my riding certainly appreciate the fast turnaround of this program and the McGuinty government's track record on municipal infrastructure investments. However, my municipality has many other infrastructure needs, as do all other municipalities. Minister, tell this House what the government is doing in the long term to support Ontario's infrastructure.

Hon. David Caplan: I want to thank the member for the question. He was my parliamentary assistant when we started the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, and he was really integral in the creation of ReNew Ontario, the program which is a \$30-billion-plus investment. We are on track, in our first three years, to have invested over \$20 billion in Ontario's infrastructure.

In addition, this morning Premier McGuinty was here in Toronto announcing that our government will invest an additional \$1 billion this year to strengthen municipal infrastructure right across the province. That \$1 billion will help to create 10,000 new construction jobs. But it's more than that. That's why just the other day our colleague the Minister of Finance tabled the Investing in Ontario Act, which, if passed, would direct a portion of provincial surpluses in excess of \$800 million to municipalities for their capital needs, and that would include municipalities in the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Earlier this week, I was pleased to listen to the concerns of the Alliance for Families with Autism at a meeting in Markham. Their concerns remain the same: Waiting lists are still too long, and many children reach the top of the waiting list and

their parents find out they're not even eligible for treatment.

Parents do not understand how these waiting lists work and how long their children have to be on them. Why will you not develop an accountable and transparent plan that works for autistic children, a plan their parents can understand, know how long they will have to wait—and see results?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you very much for the question. I was very glad that you were able to attend the meeting with the parents of children with autism. Minister Wynne and I were there, and we even had representatives from the third party.

There is no question that parents of children with autism face enormous challenges, ones that we can only try to imagine. But the wait-list issue—it's very important to understand that we ended the age six cut-off that your government had imposed, which of course opens up IBI therapy to many more children. Parents are told that the wait list is a wait list. You wait. There's no prioritization. You have to wait, and when it's your turn, you are assessed for service so that children receive IBI therapy only if they can benefit from it.

1530

Mrs. Julia Munro: Along with my colleague the member for Newmarket–Aurora, I visited an excellent treatment facility for autistic children in Michigan a couple of years ago. It represents some of the best treatment options and practices. You heard at the meeting from parents themselves that there are outstanding practices in the US and other countries. At the meeting, the Minister of Education rejected the need to study best practices of other jurisdictions. Do you agree with your colleague?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Quite apart from not looking at other jurisdictions, we are moving ahead on preparing and increasing the capacity in our education system to provide opportunities for children on the autism spectrum to get a range of service. At the meeting earlier this week, it was quite clear that there are parents in the community who have seen changes within the system. The training that has gone on with thousands of individuals within the education system, so that they understand how to deliver an applied behaviour analysis approach, has provided opportunities for children actually to move off that waiting list and get into school, because the object of any parent is to have their children as part of the mainstream education system as soon as they can. That is the goal we are working towards: to provide an opportunity for kids to move into the school system in as seamless a way as possible.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to direct my question to the Minister of the Environment. Could the minister tell me when this government is going to enforce its own

environmental laws to protect the people of Hamilton and Ontario instead of catering to industry?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The member well knows that's the whole function of the ministry, to make sure that the environment in Ontario is the best that it can possibly be. I can tell you—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You've just asked the question. Listen to the response, please.

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's exactly what the ministry's involved with on an ongoing basis: to make sure that we have the best possible environment when it comes to the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land that we all enjoy on a day-to-day basis.

I can tell you that the ministry, after many years of neglect by the previous government that was there during the Harris years—in effect the ministry was totally devastated and lost half of the people who worked there and many of the dollars that were attached thereto. We're building it back up again so that we can ensure to the people of Ontario and the people of Hamilton the best possible environment that all of us want to enjoy, for ourselves and for our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Time has ended for question period. I wish everybody a safe trip home. Enjoy the long weekend. It's time for petitions.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my signature and thank you for the opportunity.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Howard Hampton: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government through LHINs is forcing the Lake of the Woods District Hospital to cut services due to inadequate funding; and

"Whereas the Lake of the Woods District Hospital has been forced to look at closing its intensive care unit; and

"Whereas these cuts will increase risk of death among critical care patients and will increase waiting times in the emergency room; and

"Whereas eliminating intensive care in Kenora will not save the Ontario taxpayer any money as any savings will be eaten up by paying for critical care patient transfers to other centres;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health stop the process of health care cuts in local community hospitals like the Lake of the Woods District Hospital in Kenora and realize that his LHINs model is another one-size-fits-all model that doesn't work in rural Ontario."

This petition has been signed by several residents from the Kenora area, and I have affixed my signature as well.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition here regarding employment insurance. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I agree with this petition. I affix my signature to it and give it to page Adam, who's here with me today.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily

bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I've affixed my signature.

NON-PROFIT HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of Save Our Structures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas every citizen of Ontario should have a safe, healthy and decent home; and

"Whereas thousands of individuals and families are denied this basic right when the province of Ontario downloaded affordable housing to the city of Toronto but refused to pay for the hundreds of millions of dollars in deferred capital repairs; and

"Whereas poor living conditions undermine the safety and security of communities, harming children, youth and families living in affordable homes; and

"Whereas failure to invest in good repair undermines the values of the province's affordable housing as the condition of the housing stock deteriorates; and

"Whereas poor living conditions have a damaging impact on the health of communities, costing Ontarians millions in health costs; and

"Whereas investment in housing pays off in better residences and in stronger, safer, healthier communities; and

"Whereas residents of Toronto Community Housing have waited five years for the province to pay its bills and bring affordable housing to a state of good repair;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Accept its responsibility and invest \$300 million to ensure that all residents of Toronto Community Housing have a safe, decent, healthy home."

I'm delighted to affix my signature to this petition.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I do wish you a happy Easter.

This is a petition dealing with "Children and Smoke-Free Cars—Support Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome ... and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as

they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

1540

LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to support folks who have signed a petition to not eliminate the Lord's Prayer from this place.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I agree with this and I will sign my name to it.

HOME CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: This is a petition I'd like to present.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and hereby affix my name to it.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome ... and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I'm going to sign my signature and send it to the desk by page Alex.

LORD'S PRAYER

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of all daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

This was signed by many, many people in my riding, and I affix my signature to it.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm pleased to read this petition on behalf of tenants of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas landlords may currently enter into contracts of utilities (hydro, gas and water) without securing a tenant's prior written permission and submit tenants' SIN numbers and other identification to third parties without their consent;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To prohibit landlords from initiating financially binding contracts with third parties on a tenant's behalf without securing his or her prior written consent."

I agree with this and am pleased to affix my signature to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I am pleased to support my colleagues with this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

And I add my signature.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century"—1873, I believe—"and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition, it is a valuable guide and lesson for the chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I'm pleased to affix my signature.

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a great pleasure for me to deliver a petition signed by over 100 residents of my riding, Richmond Hill.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as 'surplus' to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

"Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in"—the middle of—"a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. This concludes the time for petitions.

The member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

1550

BUDGET SECURITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege and seek your ruling on a very important matter.

On Monday of this week, the Toronto Star led its front page, right below the masthead, with a huge headline: "Budget to Offer Hotline Aid," it read. Clearly, the Toronto Star considered this to be big news, and it was, because they had apparently been informed of a provision that will be included, most likely, in next week's 2008-09 budget.

Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, budget secrecy is a long-standing parliamentary convention. In defence of this convention, I would want to quote two esteemed former members of this House who were subsequently elected Premier of Ontario: David Peterson and Bob Rae. They both spoke to this issue in May 1983, when it was raised as a point of privilege.

Mr. Peterson, the then-Leader of the Opposition, said this:

"We have to ask ourselves why we have secrecy surrounding a budget. It started with a king who wanted to preserve fairness, the lack of advantage to any of his commoners as a result of proposed changes in taxation. The purpose of secrecy was to tell all citizens at the same time what policies were to be changed so no one individual could take advantage.

"Budget secrecy symbolizes that fairness, justice and the principle of respect for the Legislature and the privileges of the members therein."

Mr. Rae, who at that time was the leader of the NDP, said this:

"The tradition with respect to the secrecy of the budget is crystal-clear.... The importance of that should not be lost to you....

"I want to make just one other point, Mr. Speaker. When you are considering this as a question of privilege, when you consider the basic test, which I suggest is, 'Has the work of any member of this Legislature been impeded, been prevented?' I say that it has. In the normal course of events there would be a budget lock-up, critics would be informed of the contents of the budget and we would be able to deal with those contents in an informed and reasoned way and to respond accordingly.

"Each and every member would be able, on the basis of equal information, to communicate with his constituents on the contents of the budget. Members would be able to make whatever arguments, from different sides of the fence and from different points of view, they would with respect to the information that had been made available" to them.

I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that both of these former members were correct in the arguments they were making on the issue of budget secrecy being a matter of privilege. While I would have to acknowledge that the Speaker of the day did not find, *prima facie*, breach of privilege in his 1983 ruling, he did state that he was "making a procedural decision the effect of which will not prevent the further discussion by the House of the matter. The effect is to refuse precedence to this matter as a question of privilege but not to prevent the presentation of this matter under different circumstances on another occasion."

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are different circumstances, and today is another occasion. It would appear to me that in an attempt to gain favourable publicity for the government, someone within the minister's office deliberately leaked a provision of the budget to the Toronto Star, most likely on Sunday, March 16. The Toronto Star recognized it for what it was—big news—because of the tradition and the parliamentary convention of budget secrecy. They had a scoop, and they put it on the front page. Surely this constitutes a violation of the privileges that we enjoy collectively as members of this House. Surely, as representatives of our constituents, members of provincial Parliament should be first to hear all of the contents of the provincial budget. And surely, and perhaps most importantly, the government should not selectively leak contents of the budget to the press in advance of its presentation in the House without being challenged.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to consider these thoughts and the important principle of budget secrecy and of the historic and traditional reasons behind it, and rule on this important matter of privilege at your earliest convenience.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): On the point of privilege?

Hon. David Caplan: Speaker, I certainly appreciate my friend opposite bringing this matter to your attention. Perhaps I could shed some light on it and give you a different perspective.

I want you to know that the government does take budget secrecy very seriously, but certainly the information that was presented was not a budget leak. In fact, I'm reminded that Speaker Sauvé in 1981 commented about the very principle of budget secrecy. She indicated that a breach of budget secrecy "might have a very negative impact on business or on the stock market [and] might cause some people to receive revenues which they would not otherwise have been able to obtain ... [it has] no impact on the privileges of a member.... It has to do with the conduct of a Minister in the exercise of his administrative responsibility." That comes from Marleau and Montpetit, page 754, for your reference.

The common practice in Ontario, in fact, in other jurisdictions in Canada, is to inform the public about the government's intentions for its budget prior to the budget presentation. Today, this House approved the throne speech, which very much talked about the issue that the member raised—the government's intent to deal very seriously with matters related to poverty and to alleviate the sufferings of people in Ontario.

The particular information in question did not disrupt financial markets, give any person confidential information that he or she could profit from; therefore, it was not a budget leak. The announcement is not, in my view, a contempt of the Legislature, and no part of the announcement on poverty holds the Legislature in contempt. It does not assume the passage of legislation by this Legislature. But it's not uncommon. I'll give you a couple of instances. As the member has done his research

and shared some remarks of members past, I too have some for your consideration.

Back on May 7, 2001, the Canadian Press article reported in the Sault Star—then-finance minister Jim Flaherty is quoted as indicating that there would be more tax cuts, reliance on public-private partnerships and the sale of publicly owned assets in the May 8, 2001, budget. I would dare say that these are material and perhaps could have affected financial markets.

In the May 8, 2001, budget Mr. Flaherty announced personal and corporate tax cuts, a reliance on public-private partnerships, in particular in relation to the completion of Highway 407 east and the sale of publicly owned assets, in particular the Province of Ontario Savings Office. I believe the member opposite was a one-time depositor of that organization.

The Southam newspaper story on May 8, before the budget was presented, attributed to then-Premier Mr. Michael Harris a statement that indicated the budget to be delivered that day would curb spending and sell government assets, one of which is named in the article as the Province of Ontario Savings Office. That article too, prior to the release of the budget in this House, quoted Mr. Flaherty as advocating, once again, personal tax cuts over retail sales tax rebates. In his budget speech, in fact, delivered here in this House later that day, Mr. Flaherty indeed announced personal tax rates, in particular cuts to surtax rates.

It didn't end there, of course, and there are other precedents. In a June 16, 2002, article in the Toronto Star, the same publication that the member speaks of, government sources are quoted, indicating that the following would be included in the 2002 budget: an increase in tobacco taxes to raise cigarette prices from \$5 to \$15 a carton. Interestingly enough, in her budget speech on June 17, then-Finance Minister Janet Ecker announced an increase in tobacco taxes of \$5 per carton of cigarettes.

In addition, there was in that newspaper article of the day information regarding increased spending in health care and education. The Ministry of the Environment, in response to the Walkerton controversy—and all members of this House will recall the great attention placed upon that community as a result of that tragedy of the day. Later, in the presentation of the budget, the speech announced increases to health spending, education and other spending for clean water initiatives in response to the O'Connor report on the Walkerton tragedy, including increased funding for the Ministry of the Environment.

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I think this indicates that there are ample precedents for Ontario governments to provide their intentions for what will be appearing in future budgets. I certainly appreciate the comments of my friend opposite, but Speaker, as you consider these matters, you should find that in fact there's no contempt or any violation of personal privileges. I do look forward to and can provide you with additional information if you require it in your deliberations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member for his input, and I thank the honourable member from Wellington-Halton Hills for providing me with notice of his point of privilege, as required by the standing orders. I will reserve my ruling on the matter and render a decision next week.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HEALTHY FOOD FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 PORTANT SUR UNE ALIMENTATION SAINE POUR DES ÉCOLES SAINES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 13, 2007, on the motion for second reading of Bill 8, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 8, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Any speakers?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure and a privilege to speak about this bill. I want to say in advance that I plan on supporting it, but I'd also like to say that it's pretty thin gruel. Voting for this bill is like voting for somebody saying, "We agree that healthy food should take precedence over unhealthy food in schools." That's essentially the substance of this bill, and I think taxpayers might be a little alarmed to know that we're spending as much time as we have been on discussing a bill that has such little substance to it.

I think it was summarized best by Dr. Freedhoff, who appeared on CTV discussing this very bill. He said:

"Is it helpful to ban trans fat in school but still have it sold in the variety stores and fast food outfits right across the street? Is it helpful to ban trans fat in schools but still have it dripping in the products that parents pack in their kids' lunches?...."

"Trans fats were referred to by the government's trans fat task force as a toxin in our food supply that was unsafe at any level. If it's not safe in schools, why is it safe to have in our hospitals, day cares, nursing homes, government offices, supermarkets and restaurants?"

Dr. Freedhoff concludes by saying: "Bottom line—if it's not safe in the schools, it's not safe in the province. Get off the trans-fat fence and sit either on the side that feels our worry on trans fats is overblown or on the side that thinks we should ban them outright. Impaling yourself on a fencepost doesn't help anyone.

"Shame on you," he says, "Mr. McGuinty, for such a blatant and useless attempt at manipulating the public into thinking you care."

Interestingly, when you look at the bill and actually read it—it's a pretty thin document; only a couple of pages—you actually don't see that this bill is about a ban on trans fats at all anyway. What does this bill in fact

purport? What it says is simply, and I quote, "A board shall ensure that ... a food or beverage offered for sale to pupils in a cafeteria of a school of the board does not contain more than the prescribed amount or percentage of trans fat." It never says what that prescribed amount is anywhere in this document.

But what's even more important than the reality of this document, which says little, if nothing, is how retrogressive this move is in contrast to other jurisdictions around North America. I've pulled this off the Net, and it's really quite instructive as to how many jurisdictions have already banned trans fats outright, as our federal party, the New Democrat Party, has proposed to do. If this government actually wanted to protect the health of its citizens and its children, it would ban trans fats outright across the province.

Here's who has done it, by the way, across North America. Tiburon, California, was America's first trans-fat-free city; then New York. We all know New York has almost as many people in it as Ontario. New York is trans-fat-free—not just the schools; trans-fat-free. Westchester county did it; so did Boston; then Philadelphia; then it was banned in Albany; the town of Brookline, Massachusetts; Montgomery county; Puerto Rico; and King county. Jurisdictions that are considering banning it outright: California, Los Angeles, Connecticut, Boca Raton, Miami-Dade, Tamarac, Broward school district, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisville, Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, Albany, Pennsylvania, Cleveland, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Vermont, King county, Madison county; I could go on. This is across North America. It's a sad state of affairs, I would think, when Mississippi is more progressive than Ontario on banning trans fats.

Again, if you're going to do something, do it. If the health of our children is really a concern and the health of our children in schools in particular is our concern, there are other things that this government should be doing and could be doing right now.

First and foremost, if we're concerned about our children's health in this province, where one in five children are living in poverty, we might consider the reality that some children don't have enough to eat at all, period, trans fats or not, and that it's very difficult if you are one of the minimum wage earners in this province—of which two thirds are women, many with children—to feed a child enough fruits and vegetables on a salary of around \$1,600 a month.

One of the women in my community said, "You know, I get \$1,600 a month from my minimum wage job. After \$1,000 has gone on rent, the \$600 left has to cover everything else: transportation, clothes and food."

We're talking about 250,000 people and 1.2 million Ontarians, almost one in 12, who actually earn less than \$10 an hour, again, the poverty line cut-off. If this government really cared about the children's health in this province, then it would make sure that the poorest children among us actually get enough to eat and make sure that their parents get enough to feed them, in terms of monetary returns.

I work at a couple of places, Bonar-Parkdale Presbyterian Church—I'd like to mention them—and Masaryk-Cowan, in my riding, serving breakfast to children who don't have enough to eat at home, children who come in every day. Again, the concern for them is not trans fat versus non-trans fat; it's food versus no food.

What else should we note? The school pools right across the city are about to close because our Toronto District School Board is going to be running a deficit, according to their numbers, of just over \$40 million this year. How much would it cost this government to keep those school pools open? About \$12 million to \$13 million a year—not much in terms of this government's budget. Again, if this government actually cared about the health of the children in schools, perhaps they'd look at ways of getting these children some exercise, and the school pools are one of those. They are a valuable resource that is currently being threatened. So there's something they could do.

What else could they do? They could make sure that the children have enough education assistance. We know that this is a valuable asset to our schools and that the Falconer report, in one of its recommendations, mentioned that there are just not enough adults in schools. There are simply not enough adults helping children, in terms of guidance counsellors, in terms of education assistants, etc.

Of course, all of this comes under the heading of fixing the funding formula, which, again, this government promised to do way back in 2003 but still has not done. In fact, Murray Campbell, in the *Globe and Mail*, pointed out that their much-ballyhooed effort to extend kindergarten is completely and absolutely underfunded—again, a promise that has no backbone to it.

What else would they do? Of course, they'd also make sure that the poorest children in this province have child care. Our neighbours next door in Quebec actually offer parents quality child care for \$7 a day. Janet Davis, a councillor, just wrote a wonderful letter to the editor, and if I had more time I would read it to you, in which she says the Quebec government is actually going to increase the number of child care spaces at \$7 a day to 20,000. Again, if this government cared about the health of children among us, they would actually have child care provided for children among us—and they don't. Only one in 12 children has a child care space and the average cost is over \$1,000 a month. When you talk to parents at the door about this, they're horrified, and if they have relatives in Montreal, they know what the difference is.

Just to conclude, as I said at the outset, this is pretty thin gruel. This piece of legislation, if you can even credit it by calling it legislation, purports to do very little and has taken a very long time, at taxpayers' expense, to do it. That's what we're looking at here, when in fact—and I know my colleague Mr. Michael Prue today mentioned it quite succinctly—if they really cared about children's health in this province, the first thing they'd do is end the clawback of the national child supplement;

\$1,500 a year to the poorest children clawed back by this government. Instead, of course, what they got was the then finance minister, Mr. Sorbara, standing up, wearing \$250-something shoes, announcing a \$250 credit to the poorest children, meanwhile clawing back \$1,250.

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I'll try to sort of sum it up. What is this legislation, really? This is like Dalton McGuinty doing an impression of Marie Antoinette. What he's saying is, "Let them eat non-trans fat food." That's what this legislation, if you can call it that, is about.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak to it. I said I'm going to support it. You'd be hard pressed not to. Again, is healthy food healthy? Yes. Should healthy food be in our schools? Yes. Now, we charge the government to do something about it, and do something about the state of poverty of our poorest children in this province. Really look after children's health.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I just want to congratulate the member from Parkdale-High Park, because I agree with most of it, you see.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Not all of it?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's hard to agree 100%. Still, even 99% is pretty good. What she says is very, very true.

I have to remind those who are watching that this is the fifth day on this bill. As the member from Parkdale-High Park said, "Five days on this bill?" You'll remember that the government says, "This is an activist government; we have an activist agenda." You get the impression that they have a lot of things coming, right? So you say, "Why are we still dealing with a bill that, really, we shouldn't be dealing with?" The government has nothing else to introduce, so we've got the same bill being debated for five long days.

What does the bill contain? Two things. It says, "The bill amends the Education Act to add provisions regulating the trans fat content of all food and beverages sold in a school cafeteria." It simply says, "regulating the trans fat content." We don't know what you're going to be regulating. I understand that regulations will be coming. We'll get a sense of what those regulations are.

On the issue of junk food, here's what you say.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Please, please. "The bill also adds a requirement for boards to ensure that food and beverages sold in vending machines comply with the nutritional standards set out in regulations." That's all it does: two tiny little things. I thought you got rid of junk food three years ago, and you come back saying you're going to be consulting again on junk food. What gives?

What kind of substantive bills are you putting forth and what kind of activist agenda is this all about? Bring forth something that is meaningful so we can really debate it. I look forward to some Liberal member speaking so I can speak to that as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and/or comments?

The honourable member from Parkdale-High Park has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I note there wasn't much response, other than from my colleague here, to what I had to say, except, of course, for the heckling that continues in this House, which is sad, you must admit.

I echo my colleague in saying that we, in the New Democratic Party, really do care about the health of our children and what they eat in schools, and we would welcome a bill that does something about that. We would welcome legislation that actually bans trans fats outright, not just in our schools but right across Ontario, because if it's toxic, it's toxic for everyone. We all know that banning it in schools, sort of, even though this bill doesn't do that—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It just regulates it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It just regulates it. Even if they did that much, which they haven't, the children, as this good doctor I quoted in my 10 minutes said, just go across the street and buy it anyway. Unless you ban it across the province, you don't ban it. Unless you regulate it across the province, you don't regulate it. This is a do-nothing, accomplish-nothing bill except, of course—and people at home watching will know this—to waste their valuable money debating a do-nothing, accomplish-nothing bill for five days. If the government wants to do something dramatic, if they want to do something real, ban trans fats outright.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this legislation. I will tell you right off that I will be supporting this bill because how can you not support a bill that begins to make some corrections in how we deal with teaching life skills to our kids in our schools.

I agree with the members from Parkdale-High Park and Trinity-Spadina that we have spent far, far too long debating a bill that is purely motherhood. How much time do we need to say that trans fats are a bad thing to do?

Interjections.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: And the heckling only prolongs it longer.

It goes without saying that it's important to ensure that when we send our kids to school every morning we know they're going to be in the safest of environments.

Schools are a place for learning, not just for learning reading, math and writing but also learning life skills. We no longer have home ec, we don't teach kids about balanced meals and the practicality of how to put them together. I think this is the first step in teaching them that kind of thing.

So I commend Minister Wynne for finally bringing forward this legislation, which has been talked about for many years by some of her predecessor ministries in her government. As I say, I will be supporting the bill.

For the most part we live in a fast and convenient society that has opted for very quick and very tasty foods.

The statistics, however, have proven that this way of eating has landed us a generation of a less healthy population—both youngsters and adults; this isn't confined to young people alone. Statistics have proven that this way of eating has not been a healthy way of eating. This legislation is an attempt and an opportunity to eliminate foods and beverages sold in our schools that contain trans fat. It is my hope that this is only step one. In subsequent steps, I hope to see the guidelines and also the regulations that are the real substance of this legislation.

Progress, in my opinion, can only be achieved if the teachers are appropriately resourced, schools have the appropriate funding to ensure that these programs are implemented and also that there is a component of physical activity that goes with this.

In addition, there should be an opportunity to partner with parents and attempt to ensure that the message at school is the same message at home. Healthy living and a healthy lifestyle choice are important in our daily lives. The life skills we reinforce in our children will assist in the development of a healthy and more productive set of Ontarians.

Once again, on behalf of the official opposition and our PC caucus, I commend the minister for bringing this forward. The devil, though, is in the details and I look forward to seeing this process unfold and the details which accompany this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member from Burlington for her contribution to the debate.

Questions and/or comments by the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The problem I have with the comments being made by some of my friends on the other side is that they introduce this bill today, and it's a sessional day; we cannot debate anything else. My point is, bring forth another bill that is important to you, that is really, really part of your activist agenda, part of your revolutionary agenda. That's what I want you to do. Now that you've ruined this as a sessional day, you want me to sit down and not comment? Please. How and why would I waste an opportunity to talk to you—not to beat you up, but to talk to you?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: And there's the bottom line.

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Mr. Rosario Marchese: And that's really the bottom line, isn't it?

The point that my colleague from Parkdale-High Park made is that if we really believe that trans fats are deleterious to your health, we ban them. That's revolutionary. That's activist. But these little things, these tiny, picayune steps, they're not revolutionary, they're not tough. They're very timid expressions of where we want to go, and it doesn't do it. That's what my colleague was saying. The doctor she quoted earlier gave people the impression that you banned trans fats. You did not do that. You are regulating trans fats, which suggests that it's a good thing, and I'm going to suggest or assume that it is.

So I'm going to support you, Minister, in that regard. All I want to say to my Liberal friends is that it's such a timid, little thing. It's almost embarrassing to have five days on this bill. Please. Do something stronger. Make me feel better so that I can really say—because I won't do this too often, you understand—“Thank you, Liberals, for doing something really substantive.”

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No questions or comments from the Liberals. The people at home will not know—because they can't hear the heckling—that members don't debate this bill, they don't stand up during questions and comments. But I can tell you that throughout debate the government never shuts up. They're a heckling government. They're not a debating government, they're not a questioning government; they're simply heckling: Yack, yack, yack all the time.

Speaker, I bring this to your attention and I'd ask you to put some control in.

One thing I would like to say is to give some kudos to the food industry. We are blessed in this country to have a responsible, large and very good food industry that produces some of the safest foods in the world. When this trans fat issue came to the fore, most of the credible food companies in this country eliminated trans fats from their formulas in very short order. I give kudos to those companies for making that effort and eliminating trans fats long before this government had any thoughts of eliminating trans fats from our diet. I would agree with the member from downtown Toronto—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Trinity-Spadina; that's pretty close to downtown Toronto. I'd agree with him that this bill does not deserve five days of debate. It has all-party support. This is a government that is devoid of ideas, devoid of new thoughts, devoid of any courage to take this bill and make it mandatory. This government is devoid of any of those opportunities. I would encourage you to come forward with some new legislation, something with some courage in it.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I thought I would continue my comments by suggesting to this government some things they could do to improve the health of children in our schools and in our province. One of the things they could do is to fulfill the promise they made back in 2003, which was to build 20,000 new units of affordable housing, so the 125,000 families that are waiting for it would have a place to live. They could raise the minimum wage to the poverty level. That's all we're asking. That's all we've ever asked in the New Democratic Party: just raise the minimum wage to the poverty level, which is \$10.25 an hour right now. They're not willing to do that. Hence, they're endangering the health of the poorest children—one in five.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So they could buy better food.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: So they could actually buy food. Absolutely.

Another thing they could do is actually provide child care. You know that 40% of Quebec children have a

government space in a child care centre. In Ontario, 17% of our children have such a space, and it's not nearly as inexpensive as it is in Quebec. So again, in Quebec, where they actually care more about the health of their children, they provide child care. What does this do? It frees up money to be spent on fruits, vegetables and healthy food in the poorest children's homes.

These are all aspects of what this government could do if it did have an activist agenda, if it did truly care about the health of the poorest children in our communities and in our schools.

Of course, again, we need to remember that it promised to fix the funding formula, which is still not fixed. Hence, our schools are still running deficits. Again, this is something this government could do to provide for healthier children.

Finally, just because I know it's so important, keep the pools open. It's such an inexpensive thing to do, and this government won't even do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member and ask for any further questions or comments. Seeing none, the honourable member from Burlington has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been here for hours debating something that is plain common sense and something that should have been acted on many years ago.

I say that as we move forward on this—again, the devil is in the details—what we need to understand is that there needs to be a plan for how we address this, to make sure that our youngsters don't go on to develop diabetes, to have cholesterol problems, to have obesity problems. These are all issues that are very real, and statistics have proven that. I think that without a fulsome plan of how we approach this, we are not going to be effective, we are not going to be productive and we're certainly not going to be successful.

It is my hope, when the details of this legislation come forward and we see the regulations, that we have a plan that really has some teeth and allows our educators, our youngsters and our parents to move forward together in eliminating these issues in our society today that have to do with chronic illnesses and with obesity, and provide for a healthier society that doesn't dwell on our health care.

Again, I will be supporting this bill when it comes forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, on December 11, 2007, Ms. Wynne moved second reading of Bill 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the standing committee on social policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, to give the business of the House for next week.

The House will be resuming on Tuesday; it will be the presentation of the 2008-09 budget here in the Legislature. Wednesday and Thursday will both be budget debate.

With that, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, March 25, at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1628.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
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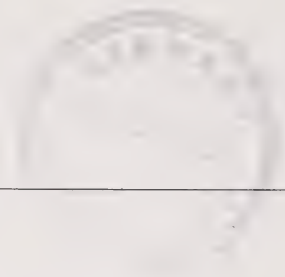
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 25 March 2008

Mardi 25 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 25 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 25 mars 2008

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BURK'S FALLS AND DISTRICT HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today in recognition of the valuable health services provided by the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre and after-hours urgent care clinic, and to highlight a developing situation of great concern.

Unfortunately, funding for after-hours care will end on March 31, 2008, and so too will this valuable community health service. As it stands, the health centre needs funding for care between the hours of 6 and 9, Monday through Friday, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 to 1.

The health centre services the communities that run from Novar, just north of Huntsville, all the way to South River; east to Algonquin Park; and west to Whitestone. Like many rural areas, the service area represents a huge geography.

The people of these communities have come to rely on the after-hours emergency services provided at the Burk's Falls health centre. They are reassured by the fact that emergency health services are there when and if they need them. Imagine facing a lengthy drive to a hospital in the winter months on treacherous roads or coping with an urgent health care crisis instead of driving to the nearest clinic.

Rural Ontarians must have health service choices that recognize the unique needs of their communities. We are not all fortunate enough to live around the corner from a hospital or a walk-in clinic.

The total cost of providing these after-hours services is \$107,000. It seems a small enough price to pay to ensure the good health and timely care for the residents of the region.

VARIETY VILLAGE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise to recognize in the House the efforts of a prominent, non-profit organization in my riding of Scarborough Southwest.

For over 60 years, Variety—the Children's Charity of Ontario, has sought to improve the integration into society of all children, regardless of their abilities. Variety

Village—its cornerstone operation—is recognized world-wide for its expertise in supporting children with disabilities. Children are taught how to participate in recreational activities with their able-bodied friends and they learn how to adapt to the equipment there.

Today, Variety teaches adaptive recreation at four major educational institutions in the Toronto area. They also train hundreds of teachers and educational assistants across Ontario. They have developed world-class technology used in the evaluation of participant needs.

As a result of the support given by our government, Variety has achieved a renewal of the physical infrastructure of the Variety Village building itself. Some 40,000 square feet of program and office space has been renovated and reopened. Fitness and conditioning equipment has been acquired that is adapted for use by people of all abilities.

Variety is also launching a pilot program called Healthy Buddies, which is an in-class program aimed to tackle child obesity. This program is supported by a grant from our Ministry of Health Promotion and will allow over 2,000 children in Ontario to participate in active living and fitness.

It is a pleasure for me to inform the House about this wonderful facility and organization in my riding. It is creating a wonderful legacy of children facing challenges who go on to achieve their full potential.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks to the McGuinty Liberals, our province risks a have-not status. Ontario was once the economic engine of Canada, but we are now at a dangerous crossroads. Since taking office, the Liberals have driven down Ontario's per capita fiscal capacity from roughly \$400 above the equalization standard just four years ago to barely over \$84 this year. This is disgraceful. The McGuinty Liberals' poor economic policies and their unwillingness to cut taxes and reduce regulations on small businesses have put us at risk. The McGuinty Liberals have failed to act, and our once successful economy will weaken in short order.

Don Drummond, the chief economist at TD Bank, recently said that Ontario is not so far from being an equalization province.

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is a very serious issue, to the members who are laughing just opposite. We have witnessed that Ontario is not far from being an equaliza-

tion province, but they have done nothing. It's a serious issue and we have witnessed the warning signs. Yet they sit by and laugh about it.

For the first time in 33 years the Canadian unemployment rate is at its lowest, yet our province's unemployment rate is higher than the national average. Since the Liberals took office, over 194,000 manufacturing jobs have left this province. That's more than any other provinces combined.

How many more warning signs will it take before this government does what it's supposed to do and protect the people of Ontario? When will they act to make Ontario the successful economic engine it once was?

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On the cusp of the fifth McGuinty government budget, I rise to make a prediction. Once again we will see a complete failure on the part of the McGuinty Liberals to provide sustainable funding to Ontario municipalities. Municipalities are still covering many sky-high bills that the provincial government should be paying.

In Hamilton, we've had almost 10 years of debilitating costs, like social services, being paid by the property taxpayer for provincial programs and responsibilities. That has created impossible pressure on our city budget, leading to reduced services, like our tree-trimming program; more and higher user fees, like our transit costs; and increased property taxes.

Adding insult to injury, last year the McGuinty government was happy to alleviate the funding pressure on Hamilton's more affluent neighbours by exempting them from GTA social services pooling. Those wealthier municipalities were relieved of the unfair burden while ours continued under the McGuinty government's thumb.

Provincial programs are big-ticket items. Our property tax base is cracking under the weight of all the additional costs heaped on Hamilton by a provincial government that doesn't pay its bills. What are some of those examples? Social housing and its upkeep, administration of social programs, and provincial court security costs where local policing is burdened with providing security for provincial courts. That's unacceptable.

In fact, at my first constituency clinic on Hamilton's west mountain, one of my constituents, Reinhard "Ron" Puschke, said his community's biggest worry is to be hit by the McGuinty government with massive property tax increases in Hamilton—not acceptable. Let's fix it today.

ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: In the history of mankind, a very important historic event took place in 1821. Freedom-loving Greeks stood up and heroically exclaimed, "Liberty or death." It was the beginning of the end of four centuries of Ottoman oppression. That tyrannical occupation did not weaken the patriotic fervour of

generation upon generation of Greeks. On the contrary, it created an unparalleled unity and strong determination amongst the oppressed people that had never been seen before. The revolution of 1821 transformed all the struggles of the Greeks and their nation to freedom and independence.

The March 25 anniversary is also celebrated with the Orthodox faith's observance of the annunciation of Virgin Mary. The divine mystery of Christ's conception and birth is one of the pillars of Orthodox Christianity, which in turn has served to inspire Greece's defenders in conflict after conflict.

Greek Independence Day represents the aspirations, virtues and pious character of all Hellenes that cannot remain in a state of siege by physical boundaries. That is why Hellenism has been spread everywhere, and why Hellenism is ecumenical and stands out for the achievements derived from their nation's battles and its faith.

1340

The Hellenes of the diaspora have the highest and most respected regard for the morals of the 1821 revolution, since their survival in the countries abroad has been a continuous struggle. Greeks celebrate this unique date with awe and respect, and a rededication to both God and country, for the sacrifices of their predecessors to the cause of liberty and freedom and for the miraculous grace of Virgin Mary, the mother of God.

I'm delighted that Sophia Aggelonitis, who is of Greek descent, is joining me in the statement. Thank you, and congratulations.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I read in today's *Globe and Mail*, in an article by Karen Howlett and Elizabeth Church, that in today's budget the government will invest in skills training.

Let's look at the issue from the perspective of one organization, the Ontario Electrical League. Electrical contracting companies in Ontario cannot find enough electricians to hire and are seeking to bring young Ontarians into the electrical trade through the government-regulated apprenticeship program. It is also a fact that many more young Ontarians want to become electricians than can find apprenticeship positions.

Many contractors report turning away young job-seeking Ontarians on a weekly or even daily basis. They are turning them away not because they do not have work, but because the government, through its artificially high apprenticeship ratios, does not allow them to hire these young people.

Yet the government of Ontario is maintaining artificial barriers—the highest apprenticeship-journeyperson ratios in Canada—to stop young Ontarians from becoming construction and maintenance electricians.

The government is maintaining these barriers while at the same time investing millions of dollars in promotion and programs to encourage young Ontarians to become skilled tradespeople, including construction and main-

tenance electricians. This fortune is being invested into programs or promotion specifically because the government itself has identified the ongoing shortage of skilled tradespeople in Ontario, including electricians, as a pressing public policy issue.

The solution is to change Ontario's construction and maintenance apprenticeship ratio to an overall 1 to 1, which is also the norm in other provinces across Canada.

In order to have a successful apprenticeship program in Ontario—for all trades—the journeyman-apprenticeship ratio must be fair. Make the ratio 1 to 1, and make it today in the budget.

TOWN OF KINGSVILLE

Mr. Bruce Crozier: Kingsville is a small, beautiful community of 20,000, 21,000 people in southwestern Ontario, in the riding of Essex. Many of you would know that Kingsville is the home of the Jack Miner Bird Sanctuary. More recently, Kingsville is the home of a great greenhouse industry, and it has a small fishing port. In the past, these are the things that you and I would know about Kingsville.

But now, Kingsville is Hockeyville. Kingsville is Ontario's representative in the Kraft Hockeyville 2008 competition. So what I'd like you to do is this: I'd like you to support Ontario, unlike some others who don't, and I'm asking you to be on our side this time. Go to cbc.ca/hockeyville or call toll free at 1-888-843-5604, starting on March 29 through April 4. Vote for Kingsville for Hockeyville, and they will be the top of the line.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to give thanks to all those individuals who have been assisting me in raising funds to send a Caterpillar bulldozer to an African orphanage in Kenya.

I'm sure all members of this House hope for stability in Kenya, and for a return to peace.

Three years ago, I became involved with the Mully Children's Family Charitable Foundation, which provides shelter, food and education to almost 2,000 orphaned children in Kenya. These kids have lost their parents to the HIV/AIDS virus, they've been street kids, and they've been abused beyond our comprehension in this country.

After I visited the orphanage, I found out what they really needed was a bulldozer. This simple piece of construction equipment would allow them to clear more farmland for food and to expand their operations, which would take more kids off the street.

Today, I want to recognize those who have helped raise awareness and organize the April 5 fundraiser in Oakville. I'd like to draw particular attention to the Ontario building and pipe trades; the International Union of Operating Engineers; Mike Gallagher, who is co-chairing the event; and Susan Hay, from Global TV, who is the emcee for the evening.

Ontario building and pipe trades, contractors and construction companies are not only a key part of our economy, building our homes, our hospitals, our schools and our shared infrastructure; their involvement in this fundraising effort shows their commitment to building hope for those who are much less fortunate all around the world.

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Last week, at Cliffside Public School in Scarborough, the Premier made an exciting announcement, outlining some of the major initiatives this government is undertaking to tackle poverty in Ontario.

One of these announcements refers to the student nutrition program. This program helps to alleviate the impacts of poverty by giving children the best opportunity to arrive in the classroom ready to learn. Through this program, volunteers and community organizations are able to ensure that our students receive nutritious meals and snacks at school and in other community settings.

I was pleased to hear that the McGuinty government will invest \$32 million in the student nutrition program over three years, doubling its current funding. This will enable local programs in Scarborough–Rouge River to expand their services, as well as allow additional schools and agencies to offer the program with a focus on low-income communities.

Ontarians want to know that their government is concerned with their health and well-being. This government understands and values that. Our social fabric must be strong across all of Ontario, and a student nutrition program is just one component of that. We understand that healthy food leads to a healthy mind, and that is an investment in students that is just as important as any other.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Scarborough Southwest, I ask the House to join me in welcoming to the Assembly today Mr. Sheikh Motalib, a member of the Bangladeshi-Canadian community, in the members' gallery.

BUDGET SECURITY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Thursday, March 20, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, raised a point of privilege with respect to an article that appeared in a Toronto newspaper. The member asserted that the article contained information which must have been deliberately leaked by someone with knowledge of today's budget.

As a result, the member asked me to consider the tradition of budget secrecy and find that a *prima facie* breach of privilege has occurred, because members of provincial Parliament should be first to hear all the contents of the provincial budget and, most importantly, the

government should not selectively leak contents of the budget to the press in advance of its presentation to the House without being challenged.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, Mr. Caplan, also spoke to the matter.

In his presentation, the member from Wellington-Halton Hills referred to an important 1983 ruling by the Speaker of this House on the subject of budget secrecy. In that ruling, the Speaker found that "budget secrecy is a political convention, as is the practice that the Treasurer presents his budget in the House before discussing it in any other public forum. It has nothing to do with parliamentary privilege."

The Speaker went on to state, "The disclosure of information relating to the budget has to do with the conduct of a minister of the crown in the performance of his ministerial duties." The Speaker found that ministerial conduct is addressed through other avenues and remedies, but that parliamentary privilege is not one of those avenues.

A successful question of privilege must convince the Speaker that the particular rights that are accorded to members of Parliament to permit them to discharge their parliamentary duties have, in some way, been violated. These rights are extremely narrow and specific; for instance, the right to speak freely in this place or to attend here without obstruction. They relate to members' functions within this chamber.

Like previous Speakers, here and in other jurisdictions, I cannot find that the possible disclosure of budget contents amounts to a breach of the privileges of the member. It is undoubtedly, at minimum, a matter of courtesy and respect for this institution that all important announcements be made here first, but there is no procedural support for the proposition that failure to do so gives rise to a successful question of privilege. I thank the member for his question.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Last week in this House, and in the past month or two in the unseemly public debate he has carried on with the federal Minister of Finance, the Premier has continuously blamed others, or external forces, for the shaky state of Ontario's economy. His government apparently has no responsibility; they've done everything right, according to Premier McGuinty.

Is it really your position that 194,000 lost manufacturing jobs have nothing to do with your government? If that isn't your position, what have you done wrong, what have you done that you regret and can we expect changes to address your mistakes in today's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): You might want to be quiet, so you can listen to it.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question, delivered in the usual supportive tone that I've become accustomed to here on this side of the House.

We are very much looking forward to presenting our budget shortly in this Legislature. It will be in keeping with the approach we've taken since 2003. You will recall, Speaker, that in 2003 the people of Ontario rejected the Conservative approach. Notwithstanding great economic conditions suited to growth—including a low dollar, low cost of oil and a strong US economy—that wonderful opportunity was squandered, and they were saddled with a \$5.5-billion deficit and dramatic cuts to our public services. Ontarians have rejected that approach in the past. They can count on us to reject that approach today, but rather to build on the foundation we've laid.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: If I heard that right, the Premier is saying his government's hands are clean with respect to the current state of the Ontario economy.

I want to remind him of a couple of things. Since 2003, the year you took office, Ontario's economic growth has consistently been below the national average; not his fault, obviously. Since July 2004—your watch—over 194,000 manufacturing jobs have left Ontario; not your fault. In your first six months in office, you cancelled planned business tax cuts, cancelled elimination of the personal income tax surtax and brought in the largest tax increase in the province's history, but that was the fault of the big, bad Tories, not of your government.

Premier, do you accept any responsibility for the plight this province finds itself in today, quite possibly going into a recession and on the edge of have-not status? Is this all somebody else's fault?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We take responsibility for bringing a balanced, thoughtful, prudent approach to a growing economy. We are proud that notwithstanding the fact we've had to contend with a dollar that's at parity with the US dollar or higher, that the price of oil is no longer \$30 a barrel as it was back then but \$100 a barrel today and the fact that the US economy is struggling today while it was firing on all eight cylinders before, we have eliminated the deficit, balanced the budget and invested dramatically in our schools and health care. We have smaller classes, higher test scores and higher graduation rates. We've got shorter wait times and more doctors and nurses. And the good entrepreneurial people of Ontario created more than 450,000 net new jobs. Yes, we are proud that we will be able to work with the people of Ontario.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think most people would suggest that with over \$17 billion in new tax revenue, it's not a real challenge to balance your budget.

A few more points to draw to the Premier's attention: Since your first year in office, program spending has increased by an average of 7.1% per year, well beyond inflation and population growth; since 2003, over half the jobs created in Ontario have been in the public sector; since 2003, the number of single, employable beneficiaries of welfare is up 11%. One could go on with this revealing and, I would suggest, troubling litany, but the reality is that over this past four-plus years, despite campaign promises, this Liberal government hiked taxes on the backs of working families, of seniors and of business, and we are all now paying the price of their harmful fiscal and tax policies. Will the Premier indicate that he recognizes that decisions by his government over the past four years have significantly contributed to the province's current economic challenges and that we can look forward to corrective measures later today in his budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think a bit of compare and contrast would be helpful here. They had a 60-cent dollar, oil valued at \$30 a barrel and a strong US economy. We've got \$100-per-barrel oil, we've got a Canadian dollar that is at parity-plus vis-à-vis the US dollar, and we've got a faltering US economy.

They left a \$5.5-billion deficit, they fired nurses, closed hospitals, fired water inspectors and attacked public education. What we've done, under trying economic conditions: We have more doctors, more nurses and more hospitals. We have more schools, more teachers, smaller classes, higher test scores and higher graduation rates. We have an economy that continues to grow—not as quickly as we would like it to grow—and we have 450,000 net new jobs.

No, we will not adopt their approach, and yes, we will adopt the approach that Ontarians want us to continue to pursue.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm shocked to hear the Premier and his blame message, blame for other people as to what the problems are in Ontario. But I can tell you first hand that in my community people are worried about their jobs, and they're worried about their ability to provide for their families, to pay their mortgages and to put food on the table. They've seen plants closing in my community. They've seen thousands of jobs lost, and those jobs belong to their friends, their neighbours and their relatives. There are warnings everywhere that this province is becoming a have-not province and that a recession may be looming, which will simply mean more job loss.

Economists agree that Ontario needs to take action if we're going to create jobs in the future. Lower corporate taxes would create this environment. Will the Premier commit today to lowering corporate taxes in today's budget so that more jobs can be created and retained?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: This was a mantra that had been dropped, obviously briefly, by the Conservative Party of Ontario. They have now picked it up once again,

and they are running with it once again. They love to talk about tax cuts in the abstract, but they're not comfortable talking about the consequences of reckless and obsessive tax cuts. They're not comfortable talking about closing hospitals.

As the former Minister of Health would know, perhaps Ontarians would like to understand, if we were to pursue an immediate \$5-billion cut in taxes, an immediate \$5-billion deprivation in Ontario revenues, we would have to close hospitals. Perhaps the former Minister of Health would tell us which hospitals in Ontario in particular she would like us to close in order to ensure that we can cut those taxes?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would say to the Premier that, regrettably, your health care policies are certainly eliminating access to health care services and reducing. In fact, as you know today, the long-term-care people are looking for \$513 million, and hospitals are also looking for more money.

But let's talk about the economy. Ontario's high business taxes are having the effect of killing jobs.

Interjection.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Yes, they are. They eat away at workers' wages and scare job-creating investments away. I'm going to ask you again Premier: Will you take steps today to protect the jobs of hard-working Ontarians and bring business taxes in line with the rest of the Canadian provinces?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: You know, the dichotomy can be found in the question itself. The honourable member, a former Minister of Health, in one breath says it's really important that we respond to the needs, the requests and the demands being put forward by the long-term-care-home community, looking for half a billion dollars, but at the same time, she says we should cut taxes by \$5 billion.

Leadership demands that you make a choice. You can't have it all ways. The way that we are choosing is the one for which we received marching orders from the people of Ontario. They said no to that approach. It is antiquated. They've got a one-point plan to grow the economy. The 21st-century global knowledge-based economy is much more complex than that. That's why we've got a five-point plan that includes continuing to invest in quality public services for the people of Ontario.

1400

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: It's interesting, if we take a look at the provinces of BC, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan, we see that they've all lowered their business tax rates. We also see that they're doing very well. They're actually weathering the economic challenges and they are thriving. It's Ontario, Mr. Premier, that is stuck in dead last in economic growth.

When will you recognize that you are on the wrong track? When are you going to take the steps necessary to make this province the economic engine of Canada again rather than the caboose?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to help make the case for Ontarians, as the honourable member was speaking,

her colleague the MPP for Burlington sent a letter to my colleague the Minister of Health specifically asking for an additional \$513 million in operating funding for long-term-care homes. So I say to my colleagues opposite, you can't have it all ways. You can't cut \$5 billion out of the Ontario budget and at the same time address these real needs, whether they're in health care, education, better protection for the environment, or more support for agriculture.

We land on the side of the people of Ontario. They have rejected that antiquated approach. They want us to move forward in a thoughtful way that protects public services while finding a way to work with businesses to grow this economy. We've done that for four years, and we'll keep doing that.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. My question is simply this: Does your government believe that all Ontario citizens should be entitled to a similar level of police servicing in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you very much for allowing me to respond to a very, very important issue. There's absolutely no question that our government believes that everyone in Ontario should have a level of policing that clearly demonstrates the importance of policing in every community in Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the minister: If that's the case, then, explain to me why your government has allowed policing services in NAN communities and other First Nations communities to deteriorate to the point that they have. We all know that we're responsible for almost half of the costs of running police services in First Nations communities, yet police stations do not meet the basic standard. You know as well as I do that in some cases the officers have to take out the slop buckets because there aren't sanitary services within those particular police stations. In Kashechewan, we had two people who died as a result of a fire because we had cells that were not to provincial standard or to federal standard. When we look at police levels as far as the amount of officers on duty in one particular day, it is nowhere near what's needed for the community. So if you believe that yes is the answer, then why is it that we're not seeing those types of services in our First Nations communities?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The member across the way knows full well that we held a meeting on February 25 with representation from the NAN. He was at that meeting. He knows that those people who were at the meeting asked of me (1) that we continue to be very, very supportive and proactive; (2) that we ask the federal government to do more with regard to funding; and (3) to ensure that we live up to our commitment.

We take the issue of First Nations policing very, very seriously. So in our meeting with the public safety minister and Minister Nicholson, we ensured that we in-

formed them of the request from the representations of NAN that were presented to us at our meeting on February 25. We look forward to the federal government being a very active partner in this tri-partnership.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, you're correct—and I wasn't going to go anywhere near the meeting we had a couple of weeks ago, because it wasn't a positive meeting. What the communities asked you for and what NAN asked you for very specifically is—we're responsible for almost 50% of the funding of NAPS policing in northeastern and northwestern Ontario. They asked you to put up your share of what is needed in order for those reserves to meet the basic standard. That's all they wanted you to do, so they can lever the money from the federal government. You refused.

I come back to my initial point. There are people phoning police stations at 3 o'clock and 4 o'clock in the morning, in communities across NAN territory, who cannot get a police officer to come to their house in the case of a domestic dispute or of any other crime. Why should that be allowed when it certainly would not be allowed to happen anywhere else in Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: In our presentation to the federal ministers, we asked that additional revenues be placed by the federal government into the First Nations policing partnership. We understand, as does the member across the way, that the split is 52-48—52% on the part of the federal government and 48% on the part of the provincial government. We have committed, recommitment and acted in good faith. We will always live up to our 48% commitment to First Nations policing partnerships. We asked the federal government to increase its share. It is their program. It's a tri-partnership between First Nations, the provincial government and the federal government. If the federal government increases its share, Ontario will automatically increase its share, because the split is 52% to 48%.

HEALTH INSURANCE FOR IMMIGRANTS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Currently, new immigrants to Ontario face a three-month wait period before they can access health care coverage through OHIP. Is the Ministry of Health ready to eliminate this discriminatory three-month wait period for landed immigrants?

Hon. George Smitherman: No. At present, the government has no plans to change the regulation introduced by the member's government.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Right to Healthcare Coalition comprises community health centres, hospitals, children's aid societies, public health agencies and immigrant organizations from across Ontario. They have over 35 members. They are asking the Minister of Health to eliminate this three-month wait period.

According to the Association of Ontario Health Centres, it would cost \$5 million to provide immediate

coverage to the 130,000 landed immigrants per year affected by the three-month OHIP wait period. Minister, will you do the right thing today and eliminate this discriminatory three-month wait period for landed immigrants for 0.01% of the health care budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate the question from my colleague. I too have had a chance to meet with individuals who were there. I am not too keen on quarrelling about the number, but a \$5-million estimate is indeed a back-of-envelope estimate that is, I'm sure, quite deliberately low.

The rationale associated with the three-month wait is well known and well established, and individuals who are coming to this country from other places are made aware of it in advance. They are given all of the best advice to make sure they have appropriate insurance for that very, very brief period. As I would remind the honourable member, it is a regulation that was initiated when her party was the government of the province of Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: At the beginning of this Parliament, all members of this House supported fairness for military families. We recognize that military families are under a lot of stress, and the three-month waiting period before they can access health care coverage through OHIP serves no useful purpose.

Immigrants generally arrive in better health than the Canadian-born population, but the healthy immigrant effect diminishes quickly because the stress of settlement and immigration puts them at risk. Immigrant women, especially those of child-bearing age, and children are particularly affected by that policy.

Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty said, "In every walk of life, new Canadians are making tremendous contributions to our economy, and our society. And when newcomers to our province succeed, Ontario succeeds.... So, our government will work with you and your family to help you settle here, and succeed here.... We will see that your family has access to"—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister of Health?

1410

Hon. George Smitherman: I think that the words that were on offer from the honourable member as a quote of my leader and our Premier have been well reflected in our government's very substantial commitment to a public health care system in the province of Ontario. I'm pleased to say, just as an example with respect to hospitals, which were mentioned in the first of the honourable member's questions, that our party holds a distinction very different from the two parties that stand across from us in the Legislature. Each and every year, under our government, every hospital has received more resources. That's a trend that we plan to continue and does stand in sharp contrast to the two opposition parties.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Premier. Economic indicators continue to point toward a serious

downturn and even a recession in Ontario. If you're here long enough, things go round and round and they come back. The last time that we saw these kinds of numbers and witnessed this kind of market volatility was in 1991. The government of the day responded with a tax-and-spend policy, which led to four years of hardship and huge deficits. Minister, will your government attempt to stimulate our economy by mimicking those NDP policies and taking Ontario into a longer and deeper recession than necessary?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very happy to answer this question because I know the people that are from this member's area would be very pleased to see that the Conservative Party would support the initiatives that this Liberal government has brought to bear for business in the province of Ontario. Right now, we have some 208 delegates, for example, travelling to Alberta to take advantage of the oil and gas sector for manufacturing right here in Ontario. Two of those companies come from Milton. I'd be very happy to share the names of the companies with this member opposite so that he too can call these companies and congratulate them on taking advantage of the amount of aggressive support given by the Ontario government for businesses right here in Ontario.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'll take that as a yes. It is your government that puts public revenues and essential services at risk by not addressing Ontario's competitiveness. Enough budget information has been leaked by the government to support that there will be little in the way of cutting Ontario's business taxes—the highest in North America, I might add. Minister, how large of a deficit will be acceptable to this government once all the business tax revenues have left Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I think it's important to note that this gentleman has a colleague sitting right behind him who on Thursday offered me a letter asking for support for a company in his riding of Cambridge. In fact, it was questioning programs that our Ontario government is now delivering to business in Ontario for support to be competitive against American jurisdictions, projects that this member for Cambridge voted against. So I'm very, very happy to say that we have already engaged with this company in Cambridge.

We are very happy to reach out, in a very aggressive manner, to land more business in this province. Despite the voting record of the members opposite, our programs are aggressive and they are competitive on a world stage. We are winning this.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the minister responsible for children and youth issues. My question's very simple: What is the McGuinty government doing to prevent private, for-profit, big-box child care centres from coming into Ontario, setting up shop and obtaining our public funding?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will always ask what's best for the child. Any decision we're faced with, we will say, "What's best for the child?" We have two important priorities when it comes to child care. One is accessibility, so parents can access good-quality child care for their children. We're also interested in accessibility and quality, so that the quality is good but it's also available.

On the issue that you've raised, we're monitoring it very carefully. We are aware of the concerns and we're paying attention to it.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: But this minister should know that big-box child care corporations buy out the smaller for-profits and even the not-for-profits. They gobble them up, and guess what happens? Quality suffers; wages get driven down; quality gets driven down; fees to parents get driven up. That's the reality, and this minister should know it. Why isn't the minister saying no, straight and flat out, to big-box child care in favour of a made-in-Ontario solution of quality accessible, affordable child care that's delivered in the not-for-profit sector in this province? That's what children and families deserve in Ontario.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You'd be interested to know that when the NDP were in office, they cut 6,000 child care subsidies. When we asked them to stand with us and support families following the cancellation of the federal early learning and child care agreement, they refused. In the words of Kerry McCuaig, executive director of the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, in 1994 she said, "The NDP have killed provincial child care." We are completely committed to improving the quality of care for kids who are in our child care and we're committed to having more options for parents.

ONTARIO FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Culture. The film and television industry is becoming an important part of Ontario's economy. If Ontario is to remain competitive, we must ensure support for both traditional economic ministries and emerging industries like film and television. In this increasingly competitive industry, Canadian and international film and television production companies can film anywhere in the world. Minister, what action has your ministry taken to ensure that the Ontario film and television industry continues to be competitive in Canada and abroad?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I am very proud that the McGuinty government recognizes the importance of film and television production in this province as a key economic driver. Film and television production and the industry generate almost \$2 billion annually for our economy and contribute to the employment of 20,000 people in Ontario.

This government is committed to supporting the growth of this emerging economic industry as Ontario has the right combination of world-class and world-renowned creative talent, technical expertise, production

facilities and filming locations. We continue to be competitive but, in order to do so, in order to position Ontario in this jurisdiction so that we can grow and thrive, we introduced a domestic tax credit on January 1 which indeed increases from 30%—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to hear that our government has recently supported Ontario's film and television industry by enhancing domestic and foreign production tax credits. This is good news for Ontario and it's good news for the film and television industry. Minister, can you give this House some examples of how film and television tax credits have actually benefited the industry in Ontario, and indeed in Canada?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I thank the member for his second very good question. In fact, we have seen an increase of those tax credits from 30% to 35%, as you note, and from 18% to 25%. That means that has increased by approximately \$50 million this year and enhanced the industry.

In addition, I would just mention that one of our most recent successes was the Canadian movie *Away From Her*. This movie was a result of our tax credit program. Indeed, Sarah Polley said that without that tax credit program, the movie never would have been produced in this province. I'm delighted that it was so internationally acclaimed. I would share with everyone the good news that this movie, *Away From Her*, was so highly acclaimed that it received seven Genie Awards, a Golden Globe Award and two Oscar nominations. I think that's proof that this government is doing very well in film and TV production.

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APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. To become an electrician in Ontario, you have to complete a five-year apprenticeship period with a qualified electrician before you become eligible to practise your trade. According to the Minister of Finance, today's budget is going to focus on skills training, and he'll no doubt be bragging about all the programs and big money you'll be spending. But to date, you have steadfastly refused to open up more apprentice positions. Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in North America that requires up to as many as three qualified electricians just to train one apprentice. If the ratio was changed so that one electrician could supervise and train one apprentice, then thousands of new apprentice positions would open up in the province. On almost a daily basis, there are contractors who are forced to turn away apprentices, not because they don't have work but because we have an artificially high apprentice-to-journeyman ratio that forces them to turn away people who want to work.

Premier, will you draft new regulations that will ensure that young people can access an apprenticeship and get a job in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am pleased that a member opposite has settled upon what we believe is a very important issue, and that is, how do we turn the challenge for a worker who has lost his or her job into an opportunity for them and for us. Because last year, for example, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business told us there were 100,000 Ontario jobs that went begging for at least four months. The challenge associated with getting somebody to take those jobs is that they don't have the necessary skill set. Our budget will speak to that very, very shortly.

But I can say with a great deal of pride that we have almost 100,000 people enrolled in apprenticeships today. In terms of how many more we're enrolling on an annual basis, we started with 19,000, and we're now up to 26,000 being enrolled on an annual basis. We think that's progress.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You're just in the pockets of the unions, who don't want to make this change. They say it's a safety issue. Use your brain, Premier. What could be more safe than one electrician and one electrical apprentice working together, a 1-to-1 ratio?

You've lost more than 194,000 manufacturing jobs, and you've got young people who want to work, employers who want to hire them. Without spending a dime, you could make one small regulatory change and put these people to work.

In the gallery today are Mary Ingram-Haigh, Richard Cullis and Stewart Kiff of the Ontario Electrical League. Richard owns Dial One Wolfedale Electric. He'll hire 15 apprentices tomorrow if you make this change.

I ask, Premier, will you stand in your place and tell the unions that this is bad for Ontario and make the change so that people like Richard Cullis can hire more apprentices and so that young people can get on with their lives and help curb the skilled trades shortage?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I commend my honourable colleague for raising an important issue: What is it that we can do together to continue to invest in the skills and education of Ontarians?

I am proud of the fact, on behalf of and working with Ontarians, today we have about 100,000 more young people going on to our colleges and universities, we have 10,000 more who are graduating from high school—10,000 who would have dropped out in the past—and we've gone from 19,000 to 26,000 new apprenticeships enrolling every year. We have a total of about 100,000 more apprenticeships in the province of Ontario today.

Very shortly, through our budget, we will speak in a very real way to the issue of continuing to invest in our workers, especially those who have recently lost a job and who can't take that new job unless they acquire the appropriate skill set.

Again, I thank the member for his interest and look forward to speaking to that very shortly, through our budget.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Premier: Colleges and universities in Ontario are charging exorbitant ancillary and user fees because of the failure of this government to invest adequately in post-secondary institutions. When the Premier was an opposition MPP, he told this Legislature the following: that turning a blind eye to prohibitively high ancillary fees is the same as "raising tuition fees through the back door."

The Canadian Federation of Students has asked the government to dedicate \$50 million per year in post-secondary funding, starting this year, to end the era of shamefully high ancillary fees. Will the Premier listen?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've made some real progress working with students in our institutions. In fact, one of the first things I did as Premier was to ask former Premier Bob Rae if he might prepare a report for us. He did, and that good work culminated in our \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan. Among other things we now have, we brought back student grants: 120,000 students this year qualified for grants. We are devoting fully one quarter of that \$6.2-billion Reaching Higher plan to improving the quality of student assistance. It has gone up by 27% in our first four years in government.

We understand the needs and some of the challenges that students face in Ontario today; that's why we continue to improve the quality of support that we offer them.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question, Premier, is about ancillary fees and user fees. At the University of Toronto, New College students are facing a fee hike of more than \$1,000 next year to help pay off a \$6-million debt incurred after the construction of a new residence building for New College.

According to the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, capital expenditures are failing to keep pace with the infrastructure needs of Ontario universities and colleges. That's why we're seeing the increases of \$1,000 per student in just one year. Why is this government putting Ontario universities and students in such an untenable position? Why is he doing that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I hear my colleague but I can't agree with him. Never at any point in our history have we had more young people enrolled in our colleges and universities. Never have we offered more by way of student assistance. Never have we invested more in capital investments in our colleges and universities through the fall economic statement alone.

I would remind my colleague that when they were in government they actually decreased operating funding by 4% while enrolment was moving in the other direction. We are proud of the progress that we have made working with and for Ontario students. There is more to be done and, in fact, we will be speaking to that very issue in this afternoon's budget.

FIRE SAFETY

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, as you know, I introduced two private members' bills in the last session recommending that our government consider changing the building code to put sprinklers in new residential units.

The national building code suggests that new three-storey or higher multi-unit dwellings be equipped with sprinklers to help prevent fire fatalities. As an MPP and a concerned citizen, I feel it's imperative we work with fire chiefs and fire prevention officers from across this province to both educate the public and help prevent residential fires.

Both families and communities are devastated every time a home is engulfed by flames.

Could you please tell me what options our government is exploring to protect Ontarians from residential fires?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me begin by thanking the member for Brampton—Springdale. She has been a champion and very persistent on fire safety issues in the province of Ontario.

I am very pleased, as a result of the work that she has done, to announce that just a few weeks ago, we began a public consultation process to ask the public for their comments on a mandatory provision of the building code that would require sprinklers in high-rises above three storeys.

This consultation will go on until April 8 of this year because we know, as the Premier said when this issue came up a few weeks ago, that Ontario has been a laggard with respect to this aspect of the building code. We're the only province in the country that does not require sprinklers above three storeys. Since 1983, 447 citizens of this province have perished as a result of fires in high-rises. We think we can do better and we think this is the right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: This is an important step in the right direction. All I've ever wanted to do was prevent loss of life.

I'm proud that our government is so committed to fire safety and recognizes that smoke alarms alone cannot prevent loss of life. I'm also pleased we're considering various options by consulting with stakeholders across the province.

Minister, I believe governments have a responsibility and a duty to protect the people of Ontario. The proposed options being consulted on will protect families in Ontario for generations to come. Can you tell me what else our government has done to improve fire safety in the last five years?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd refer this to the Minister of Community Safety.

1430

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Let me thank the honourable member for the supplementary question and congratulate her for her incredible work with regards to fire safety.

Her influence has truly been remarkable with regard to fire safety.

I want to say that Ontario is very, very proud because it has listened to the experts in the field, and it now ranks with British Columbia and Quebec as having the lowest fire fatality rates in Canada over the last 10 years. The preventable fire death rate in Ontario has decreased by 48% and preventable residential fire rates have decreased by 32%. Our ministry has amended the Ontario fire code to require working smoke alarms on every level of every home. We've adopted amendments to the fire code. We will continue to listen to the experts in the field, and we look forward to the Office of the Fire Marshal reporting back—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I received a letter just recently from Mr. Perry Rizzo, president of Axiom Group Inc. in Aurora. He said this:

"Despite our efforts and leading edge innovation, Axiom has been challenged with unprecedented negative business conditions, which continues to hamper our long-term business commitments in Canada.

"We currently employ ... 100 people in this province, but must now look at all available options, which will lead to the loss of all employment in this region as well as the technology and innovation our firm has created if ... support cannot be achieved."

The question I have for the Premier is, if Mr. Rizzo were listening to you today, given the circumstances of his business, what is your advice, as Premier, to this individual who has made investments in this province and whose business is on the brink of collapsing? What would—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very pleased to have this question, because we like to speak to all businesses in Ontario to make sure that they are well aware of the initiatives that we have brought forward to help businesses today.

For example, businesses very much like the one that this member opposite mentions would have benefited greatly from the items that were in the December economic update, as corporate tax cuts relevant to businesses today. In particular, I might mention that if this business, for example, is not in a profit-making position, then corporate tax rates which this individual is calling for will not help this company, but instead, items like the elimination of the capital tax for manufacturing—that actually helps this company. Because it's also retroactive to January 1, 2007, it helped over the course of last year as well. These are elements, like the reduction in the property taxes on education for businesses—a direct help

to companies. No matter how much money they're making, they are saving money.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just extend a warning to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. You've been very chippy today. That will be your final warning. I would really like to have you here for the budget.

Mr. Frank Klees: I spoke with Mr. Rizzo earlier today and I asked him, "If you had the opportunity to ask the Premier one question, what would that be?" Mr. Rizzo said this: "Ask the Premier, apart from all of the programs that he might be discussing, what he will do for businesses like mine that cannot access capital, which is what they need to stay in business during this challenging time. What practical advice does the Premier have for me and what will his government do to ensure that businesses like ours will have access to capital that we need to stay in business?"

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: Once again, we'd be happy to speak directly with this company, as we have unrelentingly; every time we are forwarded information about speaking to businesses, we do so. So I'd be happy to call this company and discuss directly how much we can help and how much we have helped.

In particular, the last budget initiatives, this member opposite knows, have directly helped companies that aren't in a profit position. I have to contrast that with the mantra that the members opposite have been spewing lately, because what you're asking for does not help companies that aren't making money. In fact, we're specifically targeting companies to assist in their investing in opportunities to make them more productive, more innovative—higher levels of technology, better energy efficiencies. Those are the kinds of programs that we've developed and that members of the opposition have unfortunately voted against. But we appreciate—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, I don't know if you've been following the Hamilton Spectator in the last few weeks. The emissions from Hamilton industries have an extreme impact on Hamilton neighbourhoods as residents are exposed constantly to white, brown, black tarry particulates that are affecting their health, the airshed and the water that surrounds them. Rather than constantly blame the previous government, when is your government going to enforce its own environmental laws?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, I thank the member for the question. I know that he is concerned for the people of Hamilton and has been for some time.

Certainly, it's the ministry's position that Dofasco, for example, has been told to either meet the standards and improve its operating procedures and consider improving their emissions control equipment or else they will be

ordered to do so. It's as simple as that. The current situation is unacceptable, but we are constantly monitoring that with the ministry. We're meeting with Dofasco and the other steel producers on an ongoing basis, and we have told them that they've either got to implement the program that they themselves have indicated they want to put in place as soon as possible or else they will be ordered to do so.

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister probably is correct on that one particular incident, but there are many industries in Hamilton: Union Carbide, Stelco—now US Steel. If this government is serious about the environment, Minister, when will you enforce the existing rules, when will you hire more inspectors, when will you inspect more often and when will you ensure significant fines, not just taps on the hand?

Hon. John Gerretsen: As I stated before, much work has been done but much more work needs to be done. It's my understanding that over the last four years we've introduced 59 new or updated air standards, which has really been the biggest move on air toxics in the last 30 years. We understand that our government has set tough regulations and limits for the largest industrial sources.

I can tell this member that this is a matter that is of great concern to the ministry. We are, on an ongoing basis, taking the necessary actions in order to make sure that Dofasco and the other steel producers will be adhering to the plans that they themselves have come forward with as soon as possible, and if they're not going to do that, then they will be ordered to do so.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As a province, I know that we have started to investigate and possibly may introduce the enhanced drivers' licences. While representing the province at the Council of State Governments' Eastern Regional Conference in Detroit, I was part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative discussions. As a result of 9/11, a very serious concern about cross-border trade and tourism has been raised.

Minister, you were one of the first people to recognize the potential negative impact the WHTI would have on Ontario, and I thank you for having that foresight. As Ontario manufacturers continue to face pressures from the tightened US security post-9/11—not to mention the high oil prices, the weakening US economy—our manufacturers have faced an undue hardship to cross the border and they need our help. Minister, can you provide the House with an update on the progress being made on the enhanced driver's licence as part of a border-crossing segment?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to thank the member for Brant for an excellent question. My colleague from Niagara Falls has been working on this file, as well. I want to tell them that, first of all, we have developed a new, more secure driver's licence that we launched last December. It'll be the platform that will

allow us to deliver a passport alternative. Ontario is working with the federal government to obtain and add citizenship information to the licences of people who want an enhanced driver's licence.

We're also working with both the federal and provincial privacy commissioners to ensure all privacy concerns are addressed. In fact, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner has said that she is very pleased "with the co-operation and willing attitude of the Ontario government to work with my office and protect citizens' privacy."

We're also working with the Canada Border Services Agency, and I think the initiative that we have taken will allow us to develop the kind of alternative—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1440

Mr. Dave Levac: Minister, again, I want to make sure that you get credit, because I remember the opposition laughing at the fact that we couldn't tell George Bush what to do. In fact, because of your work and the work of this government and the 39 other states that signed on, a very large improvement has been made on the WHTI.

Also, through my work with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Canadian Council of the Blind, I've witnessed first-hand that Ontarians with physical disabilities and who do not drive still face proof-of-identity challenges. On several occasions, I've met with advocates from several disability support groups and in particular the CNIB and the CCB. The vice-president of advocacy, Mr. Bob Brown, has worked very hard, along with Mr. Dennis Finucan and Dr. Gord Hope, to ask a very simple question of our government over the years they've been working to get this done. Minister, can you provide the House with an update on the progress being made on non-drivers' photo cards?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I applaud the member for Brant for his work with the CNIB and the Canadian Council of the Blind. We recognize that proof-of-identity challenges that are faced by those who do not drive for various reasons, including disabilities, are a major challenge.

Currently, I have my ministry staff exploring the best way to implement a non-driver's-licence photo card. We're reviewing policies in other jurisdictions and are making use of the work completed for the new, more secure, driver's licence card. Consultation sessions were held over the summer of 2007 so that individuals, businesses and other affected organizations could provide their perspectives on the development of a photo card. We have ensured that our contract for the new and more secure driver's licence card allows for production of a non-driver's identity card as well. Ministry staff are also working to ensure that the new non-driver's identity card will be able to be used as a passport alternative.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The people of Thornhill

and Ontario were first introduced to the concept of the health-based allocation model in the 2006 HBAM. This was supposed to be a new way of ensuring fair access to health funding across Ontario.

This year, residents in Thornhill and across the 905 received about \$700 per capita in hospital funding. However, everywhere else in Ontario, the figure was well above \$900. The word "fair" is the last word that 905ers would use to describe the delivery of these services to them. Will the health minister commit to end this practice of health care discrimination and guarantee, for residents of the 905, that funding will be equalized under today's budget and their families treated equally to those across Ontario from this day forward?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's interesting that for the purposes of his question the honourable member has used a community that has no hospital as the foundation for some hospital comparator. We're going to address that by our commitment to build a hospital and to put beds in the Vaughan community.

I can confirm that HBAM, the health-based allocation model, is a more sophisticated way of funding. That's why the Central Local Health Integration Network received the largest share of resources from our aging-at-home strategy. So on a go-forward basis, yes, I can commit to the honourable member to ensure that resources are allocated in such a fashion and consistent as well with the promises that we made to the people in the 905 in the election campaign just past.

Mr. Peter Shurman: The minister's answer is not quite good enough. Listening to the minister's double-talk, a 905 resident can justifiably ask, "What makes me different from other Ontarians?" Certainly, 905 residents don't pay any less tax. The 905 is Ontario's highest-growth environment. However, as with infrastructure and transit funding, this government is content to short-change the 905 when it comes to health care dollars. The truth is that the McGuinty government is content to allow the quality of life for Ontarians in the 905 and elsewhere to deteriorate.

Will the health minister commit to 905 residents, here and now, that they will immediately receive equal treatment and equal funding for health services, keep the McGuinty government's 2007 election promise and fully deploy the health-based allocation model announced in 2006, or does he confirm that his plan is to let the 905 continue to languish?

Hon. George Smitherman: The first thing that I offer to the people of the 905 is that we will not perpetuate the \$3-billion health care cut that they were promising in the election campaign. Further, in the presence of the mayor of Mississauga, I'm very pleased to acknowledge capital redevelopment at Credit Valley and construction under way, as we speak, at Trillium hospital; construction under way at York Central Hospital; construction under way at Southlake hospital; construction soon to be under way in Markham and in Oakville. All across the landscape of the 905 and the high-growth parts of the province of Ontario is evidence of the largest single renewal

of hospital capital infrastructure in the history of our great province—a credit to our Premier, in partnership with the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal. The people of the 905 know that the surest way to get the health care they need is not to elect—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you'll know that last week, the Ontario Mining Association and member companies were here at Queen's Park talking to all of us. They gave us a statistic that I thought was rather interesting. Last year, we moved, in a group of 68 jurisdictions, from the fifth-best place to do business for mining to 20th. How do you explain that we moved from fifth to 20th in one year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. In fact, Ontario is indeed a very positive jurisdiction in which to do business. Last year, the mineral production totals were \$10.5 billion, a \$1-billion increase over the year before. In terms of exploration activities, as the member would well know, coming from Timmins, exploration is up to over \$600 million. So indeed we are very, very proud of the investment climate, recognizing that there are many challenges ahead, working very closely with the community and making sure that we will continue to see positive investment in the future, particularly all across the north.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the minister across the way: Base metal prices and precious metal prices are through the roof, so of course there was more money taken in from mining last year, and more exploration, because of the base metal prices. But my question is this—it's a simple one: We were, three years ago, the best place in North America to do business when it comes to mining. Under your watch, under your Premier's watch, we have gone from first to fifth in a couple of years and from fifth to 20th out of 68 in two years. Explain to me why it is the case and what you're going to do to turn it around.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is, that is not accurate. The fact is that we were number one in exploration last year, and again, I think you should know that well, coming from the part of the province that you come from. The opportunities continue to be very, very positive. We're working very closely with the Ontario Mining Association. We're very proud of the fact that we're also doing this on a sustainable basis in terms of our mine rehabilitation. We're very proud of the fact that we signed an agreement with the Ontario Mining Association to continue to spend \$90 million over six years in terms of mine rehabilitation. I had a wonderful experience up in Timmins with the president of the mining association, Chris Hodgson, with the Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, as we saw the Kam Kotia mine site being recovered—good, positive news that we

hope will continue to be in place. We're looking forward to those opportunities. This is a great jurisdiction in which to do mining.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Many areas of the province are experiencing economic challenges. This government realizes how important investment is to Ontario. Can you tell the House and myself today what your ministry is doing to productively encourage investments here in Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: I'm very happy today to reiterate once again especially our Next Generation of Jobs Fund. The Premier delivered a tremendous event a couple of weeks ago where we launched the largest investment fund anywhere in the world—\$1.15 billion, all meant to go around the world and to companies at home to say, "We are partnering with you in investments right here in Ontario." It is unprecedented as a fund and unprecedented in terms of what we're prepared to partner with business to do around innovation, productivity, higher levels of technology, the kinds of future business that we want to see right here in this province. We welcome all members of this House to reach out and talk to the businesses in your own backyards about this great Next Generation of Jobs Fund.

1450

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It gives me great comfort to hear that our government is committed to this province and to our economy. I know that our province and your ministry are also committed to expanding Ontario's presence abroad. Minister, can you tell us how we are also encouraging investment abroad, outside Ontario?

Hon. Sandra Pupatello: We're very pleased to announce that we are now opening 10 international marketing centres around the world. They literally are spanning the globe. It gives us an opportunity, with officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, to be on the ground on virtually all continents, speaking directly to business on our behalf. So we will be in Paris, London and Munich, as well as Shanghai, Beijing, New Delhi, Los Angeles and New York. We have our way to speak to businesses, to tell them the Ontario story and why we're so encouraged that so many are choosing Ontario as a place to invest. We look forward to members opposite also speaking about the benefits of having our offices abroad.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craitor: I am pleased to read this petition on behalf of my riding of Niagara Falls.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond Grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario," and Niagara, "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I am pleased to sign in support.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. John Yakabuski: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human

condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it down with my page from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Daniel.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to present this petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I thank the Westland family in the Trelawney area of northwest Mississauga for gathering the signatures for it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign this petition, to support it and to ask page Natalie to carry it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my name in full support.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition in regard to employment insurance. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 60% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits"—

Mr. Bruce Crozier: That's awful.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: That's right, that's awful.

—"than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus, unemployed are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign my name to it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with the Lord's Prayer, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I support this petition.

PUBLIC WASHROOMS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition that I've read before in the House and I'm going to read again. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas the Toronto and greater Toronto area has the highest rate of Crohn's and ulcerative colitis in Canada;

"Whereas this disease requires patients' fast access to public washrooms;

"Whereas there is a lack of public washrooms on the current TTC subway system and lack of access for these patients;

"Whereas the Ontario building code only requires the TTC to build public washrooms at the end-of-line stations;

"Whereas the York subway line is about to be built with provincial dollars;

"We, the undersigned, therefore request the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to amend the Ontario building code to provide public washrooms at every station on the York subway line."

I agree with this petition and affix my signature to it.

1500

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by a great number of my constituents.

"Whereas the Ontario disability support program is designed to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities who are in financial need, or who want and are able to work and need support; and

"Whereas it is appreciated that the McGuinty government increased the maximum monthly rates in 2004, 2006 and 2007;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to establish an independent commission to make recommendations for setting social assistance rates. These rates need to be raised to provide for the real cost of living."

Thank you very much for allowing me to make this presentation.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 75% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus ... are not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end this discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I fully support this petition; I affix my name to it.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Bruce and Joy Osmond from Wasaga Beach for sending me this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I agree with this petition and I've signed it.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm very pleased to recognize the efforts of Natalia Castano and many of her neighbours in the great city of Peterborough for this petition, which they submitted through their MPP, Jeff Leal. I'm pleased to read it on his behalf. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of

the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with this petition; I'm pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Christopher to carry it for me.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

As I am in agreement with this, I've affixed my signature and given it to page George.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to read in another petition I received from my riding of Niagara Falls. I do want to thank Jesse Webb for helping to put this petition together, which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas over the past 25 years, obesity rates have more than tripled for Canadian children between the ages of 12 and 17; and

"Whereas in Ontario, less than half of students beyond grade 9 take gym classes, a small fraction are involved in school sports programs, and adolescents who are inactive at school are unlikely to be physically active elsewhere; and

"Whereas Canada's Physical Activity Guide recommends that adolescents get at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity daily; and

"Whereas a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools would result in an increase in adolescents being active;

"Therefore we, the undersigned concerned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education add a second compulsory physical education credit for secondary schools."

I am pleased to sign this in support.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Essex, I'd like to recognize the presence in the west public gallery of the mayor of LaSalle, Mr. Gary Baxter. Your Worship, welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Michael Bryant: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to suspend proceedings until 4 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

I'd like to inform the members here and members who aren't here that the bells will begin to ring at 3:55 to remind you to return to the House.

The House suspended proceedings from 1507 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO BUDGET 2008

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2008

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Duncan has moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

I will ask the indulgence of the members, while the pages deliver the budgets, that you keep the aisles clear for them. This is an important day for the pages. They want to break the record of delivering the budget in less than 25.08 seconds. So keep your aisles clear and don't be grabbing the budgets from the pages.

Have all members received copies of their budget?

The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I rise to present Ontario's 2008 budget, the first budget of the McGuinty government's second mandate.

Lors de notre premier mandat, nous avons éliminé le déficit du gouvernement antérieur tout en faisant des investissements dans la santé, l'éducation et l'infrastructure.

Prudent planning allowed us to invest in people while paying down debt and cutting business taxes.

Our economy today remains as strong and resilient as Ontarians themselves and it outperformed expectations for this year.

Still, it is being buffeted by a number of challenges that are creating uncertainty.

Resilience in the face of uncertainty speaks to the strength of Ontario's fundamentals and reminds us that

while some sectors are struggling, many more are prospering.

Aujourd'hui le gouvernement McGuinty poursuit la mise en œuvre de son plan économique en cinq points.

The plan is as sweeping in scope as it is balanced in approach.

This afternoon, I will outline major new investments in skills training, infrastructure and innovation.

The plan will strengthen long-term economic productivity, while stimulating investment and job growth. It will help us move to a greener, more sustainable future.

In addition, the government will propose a number of tax cuts and regulatory reforms to reduce the cost of business and enhance the quality of life of our people.

Finally, the budget will address partnerships: partnerships with aboriginal peoples, businesses, farmers, municipalities, unions and, yes, partnerships with the federal government.

In 2007, stronger-than-expected economic growth of 2.1% occurred despite a significantly more challenging external environment.

I am pleased to announce that this year's surplus is projected to be \$600 million.

This is our third consecutive balanced budget, and we are projecting six consecutive balanced budgets in total, a feat not matched in Ontario in more than a century.

Since we took office, real GDP has grown by 10% and the economy has created more than 456,000 net new jobs.

The economy is growing, more people are working, real income is up and unemployment is down.

Private sector forecasters expect modest economic growth in 2008 to strengthen to 2.8% by 2010.

Over that period, Ontario is expected to create 230,000 net new jobs.

Yet we know that certain sectors, some communities and far too many families are not sharing in Ontario's prosperity.

A slowing US economy, record high oil prices and a higher-than-anticipated Canadian dollar are reducing growth forecasts and creating greater uncertainty here in Ontario.

It is therefore important that the budget maintain our record of prudent fiscal planning and careful management.

The government continues to implement opportunities for efficiencies and cost reductions while balancing the budget and investing in priority public services. This has been our track record since 2004.

In the speech from the throne, our government outlined a five-point economic plan.

The fall economic statement began to implement that plan, and today we build on those initiatives.

The budget makes investments in the skills and education of our people. It accelerates our investments in infrastructure, it supports innovation, it lowers business costs and it strengthens key partnerships to maximize our future potential.

It is a balanced approach that is both prudent and pragmatic.

Since taking office we have been investing in the skills and education of our people so that everyone has a real opportunity for success.

Today we have much to celebrate. Over 90,000 more young people are going to college or university than five years ago. Ten thousand more young people are graduating from high school every year.

Ontario has a higher percentage of people with a post-secondary education than any western nation.

But there is more to do.

The centrepiece of today's budget is a new investment of \$1.5 billion in our Skills to Jobs Action Plan.

The plan will train unemployed workers for new careers, expand apprenticeships, build more spaces in colleges and universities and help students with education costs.

Some 20,000 unemployed workers will get long-term training that launches them into well-paying careers through our \$355-million Second Career strategy.

Our government will also expand apprenticeship programs, targeting 32,500 new registrants—a 25% increase over the next three years.

1610

Most important, our people will be training in areas where growing industries are experiencing a shortage of workers.

Starting this fall, we will also provide a textbook and technology grant for every full-time college and university student in the province.

Une nouvelle subvention sera aussi accordée aux étudiantes et étudiants des régions rurales et éloignées afin de les aider à assumer les frais de déplacement.

Finally, we will help build new and improved post-secondary and skills training classrooms and facilities through \$970 million in new capital funding.

Skills are one component of our investments in people.

To help ensure that Ontarians have an opportunity to be at their best, particularly our children, the government is working on a strategy to reduce poverty.

As a start, to improve dental services and make a difference in the health and well-being of thousands of low-income families, the government is providing \$135 million over three years.

To ensure that no child has to start the school day hungry, we will provide nutritious food to thousands more children by doubling our investment in the student nutrition program over the next three years.

To help some 690,000 Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program recipients, our government will increase social assistance benefits by 2% in 2008-09. This is in addition to the Ontario child benefit we initiated last year. Starting in July, the OCB will provide up to \$600 for each eligible child. This is up from \$250 in 2007.

May I pause for a moment and give credit for this great program to my esteemed colleague, predecessor

and friend the honourable Greg Sorbara, the member for Vaughan?

We are also expanding the 211 system across Ontario. It is a telephone and web-based resource tool for referrals to local community, government and social services.

Our health care system is one of our key competitive advantages. It helps make the province an attractive place for businesses to invest and create jobs.

Our government is building on the success of the last four years by continuing to invest in and improve universal public health care.

To help Ontarians stay healthy and provide better care when they need it, the McGuinty government will invest \$40 billion in 2008-09.

Nous sommes déterminés à faciliter l'accès aux soins de santé.

We will increase access by adding 50 more family health teams, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

We will expand nurse practitioner-led clinics by providing \$38 million over the next three years.

To help improve the quality of long-term care, we will provide \$107 million over three years towards our goal of 2,500 more personal support workers.

Since taking office, we've increased investments in long-term care by 38%. We've funded 6,100 new staff, including 2,300 nurses in long-term-care homes.

This year, we've provided funding for 1,200 more nurses. We have added more frequent and unannounced inspections as well.

Finally, to help seniors stay in their homes, we have a \$700-million aging-at-home strategy.

We also intend to increase prevention and the early identification of chronic diseases, starting with diabetes, with \$190 million in new funding.

We will also increase cancer screening and, for the first time, we will cover the cost of PSA testing.

Our government will continue to make record investments in the education of our people.

Continued prosperity and a competitive global economy depend on a well-educated workforce. By making investments in our schools, we have built a strong foundation for student achievement.

In the 2008-09 school year, grants for student needs, the cornerstone of education funding, will rise to \$18.8 billion.

Our government is now investing \$9,821 per student—up 24% from the time we took office.

In that short period of time, we've hired 9,000 additional teachers to ensure that our kids do better at school.

Our investments and the hard work of teachers and students have resulted in remarkable progress: higher test scores, more students graduating and more going on to college, university or apprenticeships than ever before.

Seniors have contributed much to Ontario's success.

So today, I am proposing a new property tax grant to help low- and moderate-income senior homeowners pay their property taxes and stay in their homes.

In early 2009, the province would provide 550,000 senior homeowners with grants of up to \$250. The grants would rise to a maximum of \$500 in 2010.

Over five years, this amounts to \$1 billion in savings for our most deserving senior citizens.

The McGuinty government is already making the largest investments in Ontario's infrastructure in a generation—and we plan to do much more.

Our government has modernized schools, social housing, hospitals, roads, bridges, public transit, community facilities and water systems.

This has translated into thousands of jobs—and a more productive, competitive and greener economy.

This budget includes an additional \$1 billion to invest in municipal infrastructure with:

—\$400 million for roads and bridges outside Toronto,

—\$497 million for public transit projects in the greater Toronto area and Hamilton area, and

—\$100 million for social housing improvements.

Perhaps our most important infrastructure undertaking is a new border crossing at Windsor.

As part of the environmental assessment, the Detroit River International Crossing Study is expected to provide recommendations very soon on a new crossing and access road.

Ontario will fully fund its share of the cost of the final proposed road link between Highway 401 and the new border crossing.

Sufficient funds to cover the cost of the project are built into the government's 10-year, \$60-billion infrastructure plan.

Business, union leaders and others from right across the province want to get on with this project.

Mr. Speaker, so do we.

Construction is scheduled to begin in 2009 and is anticipated to be concluded in 2013.

Finally, at a time when they are most needed, this project will create thousands of jobs in the Windsor-Essex area.

To compete in the global economy, we need to foster Ontarians' creativity and innovation.

1620

Today our government is announcing nearly \$300 million for new innovation initiatives.

The McGuinty government will provide \$250 million over the next five years to the Ontario Research Fund for investment in research infrastructure.

To help launch the next wave of Ontario innovators, I am proposing today a bold new 10-year corporate income tax exemption which will be unique to Canada.

It is a tax incentive for new corporations that commercialize research from any Canadian university, college or research institute.

Ontario is also home to some of North America's top entertainment and creative industries. Between 1999 and 2007, this sector alone created 80,000 net new jobs.

To further help this growing sector, we are proposing to enhance the Ontario interactive digital media tax credit. We will also be investing in Ontario libraries to

help them bridge the digital divide and have provided more than \$100 million in support for cultural and heritage programs right across the province.

To help create jobs and strengthen northern communities, our investment in the northern Ontario heritage fund will rise to \$100 million annually over the next four years.

Our government has also recently launched the Next Generation of Jobs Fund to help innovative businesses grow and create jobs. It's a \$1.15-billion investment to support companies and privately led groups whose products may, for example, reduce pollution, save energy or make transportation more efficient. Applicants are guaranteed a decision within 45 days of submitting a complete proposal.

I now want to turn to our plan to lower costs for Ontario's businesses.

Make no mistake about it, no matter what anybody says, the best place to invest and create jobs in Canada is right here in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind our guests in the audience that they shouldn't be partaking in the celebratory activities.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's hard not to stand up for Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

Our government has made significant progress in reducing costs for Ontario businesses.

In fact, just three months ago, I proposed a package of business tax relief worth \$1.1 billion over three years.

Today I am proposing \$750 million over four years in new targeted business tax relief. Let me outline a few of these initiatives.

To help our manufacturers now, we are proposing a further retroactive capital tax cut for manufacturers and resource firms going back to January 1, 2007. Eligible companies would receive \$190 million in rebates upon passage of the budget bill. Let's get on and let's pass the budget bill to get the help into the hands of our manufacturers and resource companies.

We also plan to enhance capital cost allowances. This would save Ontario businesses \$433 million over three years and encourage our manufacturers and forestry companies to invest in new equipment.

In this budget we will accelerate business education tax rate cuts by four years so that northern business property tax rates will be at the maximum of 1.6% in 2010. Over three years, this will save northern businesses a total of more than \$70 million.

Small businesses create jobs for Ontario communities and we thank them for their advice on reducing the business education tax rates and the paper burden.

This year, we will modernize business and financial regulations and streamline approval processes—to help reduce red tape for hard-working Ontario business people.

This will begin with an aggressive cap-and-trade initiative—when new regulations are introduced, others

will be eliminated. It will be the most aggressive of its kind in Canada.

The McGuinty government is also committed to strengthening competitiveness in key sectors.

Le secteur minier compte parmi les récentes réussites éclatantes de l'Ontario.

To encourage further growth, the government will invest \$20 million for geological mapping and close to \$7 million to implement the Ontario mineral development strategy.

Our forest products sector is the mainstay of many northern Ontario communities. Since 2005, the McGuinty government has provided over \$1 billion in support to the forestry sector.

To help address the challenges the sector is facing, the government proposes to reduce the stumpage rate for poplar hardwood to encourage new investment.

Ontario's tourism sector has been resilient and tourism employment continues to grow.

To help encourage further growth, the government is investing \$110 million to strengthen and expand tourism in Ontario.

A competitive economy is a green economy, and so we are increasing funding to fight climate change and create an environmental curriculum.

I am also proposing to extend the RST exemption for Energy Star household appliances and light bulbs as well as for bicycles and related safety equipment.

I am most pleased to announce that the government will also support bio-economy research in Thunder Bay and launch a new centre for invasive species management in Sault Ste. Marie and encourage Ontarians to buy locally by contributing to the Pick Ontario Freshness strategy.

Partnerships for progress are essential to Ontario's social and economic development.

We are building stronger relationships with the aboriginal peoples of Ontario. The new Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs will have an annual budget of almost \$50 million and guide more than \$600 million in programs right across the government.

We are especially proud of the new \$3-billion agreement with Ontario First Nations to share revenues from our gaming operations which was concluded last month.

Buy Ontario is about more than being sure we purchase our fruits and vegetables from Ontario farmers—it's about recognizing the importance of the agri-food sector to our future prosperity.

The groundbreaking risk management program established this year, coupled with the \$1.1 billion we will spend in the coming year, will help ensure that Ontario farmers continue to have a full partner in their provincial government.

Since taking office, we have worked hard with our partners in the public sector.

Nurses, teachers, civil servants all make an invaluable contribution to the strength of our economy.

Collective bargaining is never easy, particularly at a time when the economy is challenged. We look forward

to negotiating new collective agreements this year with our partner unions that honour the contribution of their members and respect the needs of all Ontarians.

As we move forward, we want to build new partnerships.

The financial services sector is a major and growing part of Ontario's economy. We are world leaders in banking, insurance and finance.

1630

Toronto is the third-largest financial centre in North America. More than 350,000 people work in financial services—an increase of 50,000 in the past 10 years.

Moreover, the vast majority of these jobs are high skilled and well paid. Financial services attract other jobs and investments to the province.

This government is committed to working with our financial services sector to identify ways we can support their continued growth. We'll have much more to say about this in the coming days.

Since 2003, we have worked very hard to establish a real partnership with Ontario's municipalities.

We have more than doubled operating assistance to our municipal partners and are uploading the Ontario drug benefit program and the Ontario disability support program, which will save municipalities some \$900 million annually by 2011.

I want to thank our partners who have been working on the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review—some of them are here in the galleries today: Doug Reycraft, from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; Toronto's Mayor David Miller; Stratford's Mayor Dan Mathieson; and, of course, Ontario's youngest mayor, Hazel McCallion.

Partnerships are never easy. They involve hard work and compromise, but deliver real rewards.

Ontarians expect the federal government to be a full partner in responding to today's challenges and building tomorrow's prosperity.

We have a plan to meet and overcome the challenges currently facing Ontario. But we would get better results much faster in partnership with the federal government.

We are moving forward with help for our unemployed workers, but we need a federal partner to ensure that Ontario workers get their fair share of employment insurance benefits.

Average benefits for an unemployed Ontarian are over \$4,000 a year less than in other provinces.

We are moving forward with better health care, but we need a federal partner to provide Ontarians with equal per capita health care funding this year, not 2014.

We are moving forward with infrastructure, but we need a federal partner to provide Ontario communities with an equitable share of funding. That should have begun last year.

We need a federal partner that will come to the table for our manufacturing and forestry sectors the same way it does for other sectors in other parts of the country.

We want a strong Ontario, because a strong Ontario means a strong Canada, and we are proud Canadians.

To conclude, I would like to begin by thanking the dedicated team of public servants in the Ministry of Finance who have made an invaluable contribution to the creation of this budget.

The McGuinty government's five-point economic plan takes a pragmatic, balanced approach to the province's finances.

En investissant prudemment dans la formation et l'infrastructure, nous créons des emplois aujourd'hui et nous soutenons notre productivité future.

The innovation initiatives in this budget ensure that Ontario will continue to be on the cutting edge of new technology.

They will propel us to a greener, more sustainable economy.

Competitiveness is defined by a broad range of factors, including education, health care, a cleaner environment and, yes, taxes.

This plan strikes the right balance and enhances those public services that make Ontario the best place in Canada to live, work and, yes, invest.

This plan undertakes initiatives for those sectors, communities and families that are most impacted by the reality of our external challenges.

Premier McGuinty is fond of saying that for the economy to truly succeed we need everyone at their best.

This fundamental value is at the root of all we do.

The resilience of Ontario's economy will continue into the future because of the ingenuity, perseverance and compassion of our people.

This plan affirms our conviction that prosperity is found where quality public services are funded by a competitive tax system.

Working together, we can build an even better future. We can build a future that is as prosperous and inclusive as Ontario, we can build a future as sustainable as it is competitive, and we can build a future that is as full of hope as the people of Ontario themselves.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I seek consent to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BUDGET MEASURES AND INTERIM APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LES MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES ET L'AFFECTATION ANTICIPÉE DE CRÉDITS

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act respecting Budget measures, interim appropriations and other matters / Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant les mesures budgétaires, l'affectation anticipée de crédits et d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I've already done that, sir.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2008, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly. Dated March 25, 2008.

The pages did an excellent job. They just didn't quite make it; 27.64 seconds, though. That's fabulous, so thank you very much.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move adjournment of the House.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I might point out, on behalf of those pages, that there are 107 members in this House now, so we have to rethink that record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker thanks the member for that point, so you know what? You've just set the new record. Congratulations.

The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour? It's carried.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1640.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (L)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Arthurs, Wayne (L)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (L)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (L)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (L)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / procureur general
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (L)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (L)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (L)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (L)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	St. Paul's	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires autochtones, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (L)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (L)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal / ministre du Renouvellement de l'infrastructure publique
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (L)	Barrie	Minister of Culture, minister responsible for seniors / ministre de la Culture, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (L)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	Deputy Speaker, Chair of the committee of the whole House / Vice- Président, Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Delaney, Bob (L)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (L)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (L)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (ND)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (L)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (L)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (L)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Minister of Finance, Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / ministre des Finances, président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (L)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (L)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Gélinas, France (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (L)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora–Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (ND)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Third Deputy Chair of the committee of the whole House / Troisième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Kular, Kuldip (L)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (L)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (L)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier and President of the Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (L)	Ancaster–Dundas– Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (L)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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Tabuns, Peter (ND)	Toronto—Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (L)	Mississauga—Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Entrepreneurship / ministre des Petites Entreprises et de l'Entrepreneuriat
Van Bommel, Maria (L)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
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Wednesday 26 March 2008

Mercredi 26 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 26 March 2008

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Frank Klees: When Premier McGuinty announced that this Legislature should consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings, he struck at the very core of what millions of Ontarians of diverse backgrounds consider a significant part of their religious heritage. In response, this Legislature has received thousands of petitions from Ontarians of all faiths and cultures, calling on this Parliament to maintain the Lord's Prayer.

Joining us in the House today is Mr. Shadah Khokhar, who is of Pakistani background and who, along with many representatives of the Pakistani-Canadian community, has delivered more than 1,500 signatures in support of that petition. They are here today to call on the Premier to continue to honour their Legislature's parliamentary and religious traditions.

It is not mere coincidence that another petition has been tabled in this Legislature, numbering in the thousands of signatures, that also speaks to honouring our religious and cultural heritage. That petition calls on the Parliament to declare April 2 as Pope John Paul II Day in recognition of his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights.

I ask honourable members to consider the appeal of both petitions before us, as both honour our religious and cultural heritage.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Historically, budgets provide a government with an opportunity to present their plan for the future. Governments should use their budget to introduce new ideas and new initiatives, their plan to deal with the challenges and opportunities facing Ontario. Unfortunately, what we heard in yesterday's budget was a rehash of old announcements and reused rhetoric.

On page 46 of the budget papers we are given an overview of 10 programs; no fewer than eight had already been announced or leaked by this government before yesterday's budget. Contrast these old announce-

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 26 mars 2008

ments with the excellent work prepared by the Progressive Conservative caucus with our dissenting report released last week.

Ontario's economic growth is below the national average, and we are losing record numbers of jobs and people to other provinces. Where is the commitment to reduce the job-killing capital tax immediately? Where is the tax relief for hard-working Ontario families?

It is unfortunate that this government has chosen to reannounce rather than set out their plan for the future. Where is the vision? Where is the plan? What we have is a second-term government riding a wave of apathy while the Ontario economy falters and hard-working Ontario families pay the price with high taxes—another missed opportunity.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney: The northwest neighbourhoods of Streetsville, Meadowvale, Lisgar and Churchill Meadows are the fastest-growing part of Mississauga. Since the late 1980s, more than 110,000 people have moved into Lisgar and Churchill Meadows alone.

On September 4, we all celebrated the official opening of the Lisgar GO train station that enabled many of us, including me, to leave our cars at home and take public transit. Every day, up to 900 cars are parked at Streetsville—900 cars that are not on our roads.

And we need more. Go Transit's greatest need in moving people between where they live and where they work and study is all-day service on the Milton line, that Milton line which serves us, and only us, in western Mississauga. Those tracks are owned by CP Rail, and CP Rail uses them at full capacity. To enable GO Transit to offer all-day GO train service, we need a third track between Milton and Toronto. That also means that bridges need to be either replaced or upgraded, including the main span over the Humber River leading into Toronto. The third Milton line track is a Mississauga priority.

In June 2007, our government announced the Move Ontario 2020 plan, a 12-year, \$17.5-billion massive undertaking that is the largest public transit infrastructure investment in North America.

Both GO Transit and the government of Ontario recognize the need for the third track on the Milton line, and that is why the design of the Lisgar GO train station allowed for that third track to be added right upfront. The people of northwest Mississauga look forward to another

transit ribbon-cutting for the third track on the Milton line.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr. Michael A. Brown: It's with great pleasure that I rise today in the House to speak about the significant initiatives for northern Ontario that were in yesterday's budget.

The government understands that we need to maintain strong, vibrant communities in the north to ensure Ontario's economic success, which is why this budget includes over \$508 million for strategic northern initiatives over the next four years.

Business education tax rates will be reduced more quickly in 85 northern municipalities. This will benefit more than 30,000 businesses, resulting in tax savings of over \$70 million. We are also increasing funding for the northern Ontario heritage fund, which will increase to \$100 million annually by the year 2011-12. These initiatives are just two of a number of important investments set out in the budget specifically for northern Ontario.

And because we realize that sound infrastructure attracts business, the budget will set out \$302 million over the next four years for new investment in northern highways. This is in addition to the record amount of \$557 million that we will be investing in northern highways in 2008-09.

This government knows what needs to be done in northern Ontario. We know that investing in businesses and working in partnership with northern Ontarians is the right way to move forward.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The underfunding of post-secondary education went on its uninterrupted path with the help of yesterday's budget.

Let me talk about the U of T as an example. A professor at the University of Toronto contacted me, concerned that the university will be dealing with a 4% cut in the budgets for all departments in the faculty of arts and sciences, with the projected cuts totalling 6% to 10% over the next four years. Ontario already has one of the worst faculty-student ratios in North America and is virtually last in per capita funding. New College students at the University of Toronto are facing a fee hike of more than \$1,000 next year. They've organized rallies, sit-ins, protests—all ignored by the Premier and this government.

1340

And to believe that yesterday, the Premier told me to look for solutions in the budget. I looked, and this government is spending only \$200 million more this year than last year on the entire provincial budget. That is a 0.002% increase in the budget. That is less than one half of one half of a penny on the dollar. Premier, with half of half of a penny, you won't help the University of Toronto or any college or university. With half of half of a penny,

you will be able to do less than half of the half you promised and none of what students actually need.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Mike Colle: Yesterday's budget shows us that the Ontario that we love is moving forward again. Our bold investment in public transit is one of the reasons I'm proud of yesterday's people's budget. There is \$497 million for public transit in the GTA, including \$293 million for Yonge subway capital improvements and \$7.1 million for a head start on Toronto's Transit City plan. One of the proposed Transit City projects is the Eglinton crosstown light rail route, which runs through my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. Eglinton Avenue is the only east-west road that connects Peel region to Durham region, right through the heart of our great city. The Eglinton Crosstown LRT would have an estimated annual ridership of 53 million customers and would benefit business, traffic flow and the environment.

Across the province, we are investing, in this budget, over \$1 billion in municipal infrastructure, from roads and bridges to GO Transit, the TTC and public transit authorities across this great province.

As former chair of the TTC, I know how important investing in public transit is for our city, our environment, our economy and the future clean air that our grandchildren will breathe. Unlike Mr. Harris, who in 1995 stopped the construction of the Eglinton subway, we are now building and working again for better transit, better air quality and a better city for all of us.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Mr. Speaker, I rise sadly today with a lament for Ontario.

Farewell, oh sweet prosperity,
our long-sought-after friend.
For years you lived in our fine land
but now we can't contend.

Goodbye, oh job security,
the fruit of labour done.
They say that job retraining
is the new prize that we've won.

So long, oh public revenue
from corporate business levy.
The cost of public services
will certainly be heavy.

For any per cent of zero
is zero just the same,
And that's how many businesses
are likely to remain.

Oh free market, we will miss you;
have a lovely time out west.
The government will take your place,
content to be 10th best.

Au revoir, oh innovation
with our best brains you'll go too,
Alongside our leaving workers
with wages to pursue.
Oh golden age of affluence,
oh dreams of milk and honey,
Why would you stay in such a place
that takes your hard-earned money?
Oh former strong economy
in such a fragile state,
Your obituary's just released
in budget 2008.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I rise in the House today to highlight some of the fantastic investments, set out in yesterday's budget, that this government is making in Ontario's health care system. I rise today with personal ties to this government's advances in health care through my husband, Dr. Richard Upenieks; my sister, Dr. Sara Pendergast; and my brother, Dr. Patrick Pendergast.

Yesterday's budget proposed an investment of \$40.4 billion in Ontario's health care sector in 2008-09, a 37.5% increase since 2003-04. From this \$40.4 billion, this government will invest in hiring 9,000 nurses by 2011-12. We will hire over 2,500 more personal support workers for long-term-care homes over the next three years. We will invest in more MRI machines. We will provide funding for more general surgeries. We are investing in a chronic disease prevention and maintenance strategy, starting with diabetes. The list of investments goes on and on but the objectives are simple: We will improve access to health care, shorten wait times and continue to promote preventive health measures. St. Mary's hospital in Kitchener now boasts cardiac care door-to-balloon times 20 minutes below the benchmark. Less than 10% of US hospitals can meet that standard. We refuse to sacrifice our doctors, nurses and health care professionals. Let's not move backwards to a time of closed hospitals. Let's move—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member's time is up. The member from Huron-Bruce.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: The budget that was presented yesterday has plenty of good news for Ontario's rural communities. Within the budget, we see many opportunities for this government to work with rural communities and ensure that they have the right tools they need to succeed and thrive. Rural Ontario will benefit from the share of the \$400 million in 2007-08 and it will build and repair municipal roads and bridges.

A second key investment is the \$450 million from the municipal infrastructure investment initiative, which will go towards priority capital projects. We're making it easier for students from rural and remote areas to go to

college or university by providing \$27 million over three years for a distance grant, which will help with travel costs. This will keep our youth in rural areas so that they can build their businesses and raise their families.

There's an additional \$30 million over four years to enhance broadband, and this investment brings our total investment to \$40 million for Rural Connections.

You can see from just a few of the initiatives that were set out in the budget that this government is investing in what rural Ontario needs. This government recognizes the unique challenges that rural Ontario faces. The initiatives that were set out in yesterday's budget will help to address these challenges. We will work towards a strong and vibrant future for rural Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Michael Prue: I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): The standing committee on regulations and private bills presents the committee's report as follows:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting St. Andrew's Congregation of the United Church of Canada at Toronto;

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive 872440 Ontario Inc.;

Bill Pr6, An Act to revive 71056 Ontario Limited.

Your committee further recommends that the fees and the actual cost of printing and all stages be remitted on Bill Pr3, An Act respecting St. Andrew's Congregation of the United Church of Canada at Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the supplementary estimates 2007-08 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Public Infrastructure Renewal, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Ministry of Transportation before the standing committee on estimates are reported back to the House, as they were not selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 26, 2008, of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2008

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2008

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008 /
Projet de loi 45, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2008.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The minister for a short statement? No.

1350

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (ORGAN DONATION EDUCATION), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (ÉDUCATION SUR LE DON D'ORGANES)

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to education on organ donation / Projet de loi 46, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation à l'égard de l'éducation sur le don d'organes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Dave Levac: The bill, if accepted, amends the Education Act and requires school boards to include education on the importance of organ donation in the curriculum of students in the senior division, such that every student, subject to certain expectations, who receives their OSSD or equivalent accreditation will have learned the importance of organ donation.

In Canada, there are fewer than 14 donors per one million people. With this expanded knowledge, students can learn that everyone can play a role in reducing these needless deaths, which cost approximately 250 lives in Canada each year, and help over 4,000 others suffering

from related organ failure or injury by donating their organs to transplant.

GRAND AVENUE HOLDINGS LTD. ACT, 2008

Mr. Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive Grand Avenue Holdings Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Bryant: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice in respect of the standing committee on public accounts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Michael Bryant: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated December 11, 2007, while the House is in session during the months of March, April, May and June 2008, the standing committee on public accounts may meet on Thursdays until 1 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Agreed to.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Peggy Taillon, her son and a new Ontarian, Devlin Taillon, and Denis Taillon. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member for Northumberland—Quinte West, we'd like to welcome today in the west gallery his guests, Ms. Sherry French and Mr. Paul Gillespie.

On behalf of the member for Rainy River, we'd like to welcome the following guests to the gallery today: Alana Kapel from the North-South Partnership for Children, Linda Nothing-Chaplin from the North-South Partnership for Children, Jack Lapointe from the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, Jacob Ostaman from KI First Nation and John Cutfeet from KI First Nation. Welcome.

On behalf of the member for Davenport, we'd like to welcome the family of Magali Toy, who is one of our pages: her mother, Leslie Toy; Jim Gronau, her father; Augusta Jones, a friend; and Hannah Barnard, a friend as well. Welcome today.

On behalf of the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook, we'd like to welcome visiting friends and family members of our page Michael Kushnir: Brenda Kushnir, Michael's mother, and Jim and Kathleen Thoms, his grandparents. Welcome to Queen's Park today as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. Premier, in your budget you speak to the need to expand apprenticeships and launch workers into new, well-paying careers. Yet yesterday, when the member for Simcoe—Grey, Mr. Wilson, asked you about the ratio of tradesmen to apprentices currently in place in Ontario—three tradesmen to one apprentice or essentially three teachers for every student—you refused to answer. This ratio is turning away thousands of apprentices in the electrical, plumbing, sheet metal and carpentry trades. Will the Premier make an effort to answer the question today? Will he change this discriminatory ratio?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, let me say that I'm pleased to receive the question and, to be very specific, to look into the matter. My understanding is that these ratios are set by special advisory committees. We will certainly take a very close look at it because our intention is to fill in the skills gap. As you know, we have Ontarians who are losing their jobs today through factors beyond their control. We have invested in a dramatic way in 20,000 workers to ensure they have access for the first time to long-term training, and beyond that, to take our annual influx of apprentices from 26,000 to 32,500.

Obviously what the leader of the official opposition is talking about would, if it were workable, help us resolve this skills gap.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think it's easily workable, and we would urge the Premier to move on it. He likes to talk about the money his government is spending on apprenticeship training and the increase in the number of apprentices, but the reality is, there's no point in pouring money into apprenticeship programs if the current hiring ratio is keeping thousands of apprentices from actually getting a job in a trade.

In keeping with all of the other poor economic indicators that we keep hearing about, other than Prince Edward Island, Ontario has the most stringent electrical trade ratios in Canada. Ontario spends thousands of dollars training these apprentices and they turn around and move to other provinces like Alberta, where the ratio is 1 to 1. In every province west of Ontario, the ratio is 1 to 1.

It's a simple solution that doesn't require any new tax dollars. What's behind your reluctance, Premier? Does it have anything to do with your debts to certain unions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I have said that we will take a look at this. There may very well be something there that we can and should do in order to ensure that we are

meeting the demand for skills. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business tells us that in 2007 there were 100,000 jobs that were available for at least a period of four months which weren't being taken, predominantly because people who were available to take those jobs didn't have the necessary skill sets. That's why we have about 100,000 apprentices—110,000 apprentices, in fact—who are being trained today. When we first formed the government, there were 19,000 new apprentices being brought online every year. We want to take it up to 32,500 now.

Again, I say to the leader of the official opposition: He's made a suggestion. I think it's reasonable, and we will take a look at it

1400

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We'll look forward to an early announcement.

A bit of a different tack: Yesterday's budget said that the goal of the \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs action plan was to give unemployed workers the skills to get a job in industries that were growing and experiencing labour shortages. There is an article in today's *Globe* that says your government officials have indicated—I'm quoting from the paper—that "the strategy will not require individuals to study in specific high-demand areas." Premier, what exactly, then, is the money being spent on? If they're not being trained in an area where there is a labour shortage in Ontario, aren't we just spending the money on training unemployed people who will then pack up and get a job in Alberta?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I have a great deal more faith in the wisdom of individual Ontarians to pursue the kind of training that is going to lead to good jobs for them and their families. What the leader of the official opposition is proposing, to take it to its logical conclusion, is that we put in place some kind of a regulatory process that determines which industries are specifically going to grow and would hold employment opportunities for some and which we should not be funding.

I can tell you, if you are 42 years of age and you've lost your job in forestry or lost your job in manufacturing, you've got grocery bills that you've got to pay, you've got rent or you've got mortgage payments that you've got to make, when it comes to considering what kind of a job training opportunity you're going to pursue, you're going to be very, very sober-minded about making that kind of decision. I place my confidence in the ability of Ontarians to make that kind of a call. It's not a call for our government to make.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Four years ago, your minister tearfully promised a revolution in long-term care, plus you promised an additional \$6,000 in funding per resident in personal care. Now, not only have those promises been broken, but then your minister further insulted these residents by

saying that he was going to wear a diaper to see if the product was appropriate.

Premier, the problem is not the diaper, the incontinence product; it is the fact that staff don't have enough time for preventive incontinence care, and this budget from yesterday isn't going to help that situation. I ask you, how are our homes going to be able to maintain the staff and the programs they currently have if there's no increase in the operating per diem for inflation, wage adjustments and other operating cost pressures?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member was away last week when I was—

Interjections.

Hon. George Smitherman: With respect, I was simply going to say that I want to make sure that she understands from me that when I did speak in the scrum about incontinence products, it was with a view towards the product. I meant absolutely nothing but to address this in a dignified way, having witnessed for seven months the final conclusion of my father's life, where he was in need of a very high level of care.

When the honourable member was in the government, they eliminated a 2.25 minimum standard of care that was on the books. With the investments in the budget yesterday, we'll be bringing that standard to three hours per day of purchased care for our long-term-care residents, evidence of substantial enhancement on that point.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This minister probably should move over and give the job to somebody else. You have had almost five years, and you still hearken back to when we were there or to when the NDP were there. The reality is, your announcement yesterday only increases the average hours of care—actual care, not including vacation pay and maternity time—from 2.6 to 2.7 hours of care, and not the three hours that was requested.

I say to you, Minister: Why did you not recognize that our seniors today demand more care? There are more instances of violence and abuse, and 68% of them suffer from dementia or other forms of cognitive impairment. Why didn't you give them the three hours, but only the 2.7 in actual worked hours?

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate, as always, the observations from the member from "Do as I say, not as I did," but the reality is that on her watch, they eliminated standard of care.

We've made investments over the last four years that have added 9.55 million hours of additional care in our long-term-care homes. Through the good work of the Minister of Finance yesterday, we were able to profile for the long-term-care residents in the province of Ontario a plan to add 2,500 additional personal support workers and 2,000 nurses over the next three years.

In addition, I can only say that the party that calls for a \$5-billion reduction in revenue is in a very peculiar place to be calling for sustained investments. I think that Ontarians can do the math, and that's why Ontarians

have concluded that it's better for health care to have Liberals over here than Progressive Conservatives.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would certainly disagree with that assessment. You know, this is the minister who promised the revolution, this is the minister who promised \$6,000 in additional personal care, and this is the minister who now has decided not to respond to the request for an average three hours of personal care per resident, even though the needs of the seniors in these homes are increasing. You simply don't listen.

I want to talk about the money you allocated yesterday for those positions. We agree that money is needed. However, what you have done, one more time, is you have made specific allocations instead of flexible funding for the homes to hire the staff that they need, such as, in some cases, activity aides and food service workers.

Minister, as you know, there is a nursing shortage. I ask you today: If these homes cannot hire the 2,000 nurses, will they need to return the money to you, or can they provide that additional money for other positions?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say first off that when the honourable member had the opportunity in the discussions about Bill 140 to vote on whether we should add a minimum standard of care, she did not vote in favour of it. We have her own record from the time that she was in a government that eliminated such minimum standards, and we contrast that to our record.

Firstly, we're consistent on the point that if you want to make investments in health care, you have to have the resources. They're inconsistent. They want to cut \$5 billion in revenue and they want magically to be able to address every spending requirement. In fact, we have letters from almost all of them asking for an additional half-billion dollars in funding for long-term care this year.

Our record is clear: 9.55 million additional hours of care so far, and through the investments made possible by our budget and by our plan, the additions of thousands more bedside care providers, because we believe fundamentally that enhancing the quality of care in long-term care depends on investment, investment made possible by resources that they like to pretend about but are in favour of eliminating.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier, regarding the McGuinty government's shortchange budget: It's clear there's no plan to sustain manufacturing jobs in this budget. It's also clear there is no plan to provide quality care for seniors living in long-term-care homes and nursing homes. My question is this: Where is the McGuinty government's plan to address these pressing challenges? It's certainly not in the budget.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: To the contrary, the funding line for long-term-care homes sees a 5.7% increase, from \$2.682 billion to \$2.836 billion. This will allow not only for ongoing support for those expenditures which are already made in the form of base budget increase, but

this will also be an increase in the comfort allowance. We're very proud to announce that this will allow for 864 additional personal support workers to be added to our long-term-care repertoire this year. This enhances the quality of care. And further, we've laid out a plan that will build on this: a total of 2,500 additional personal support workers and 2,000 additional nurses, adding millions of hours of additional care to enhance the quality of care that is there.

I remind the member that when he was in government, that government's standard was 2.25 hours. Through our investments made possible in this budget, we've achieved 3.0, heading towards 3.25.

1410

Mr. Howard Hampton: A child in elementary school can do the division. What you have added is six minutes more of nursing care or personal care. That's all that our seniors are receiving in our homes for the aged. And that's why this is a shortchange budget. Money from the current year's surplus is being shovelled out the door by the Minister of Finance in a last-minute fashion. But there is no plan—no plan for our seniors and no plan for manufacturing jobs.

But I want to ask the Premier: Where is the plan for affordable regulated child care? Where is the plan to address poverty in Ontario? It certainly isn't in the budget either.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that perhaps he depends upon elementary math, but we think it's very noteworthy that through the investments we've been able to make in Ontario's health care system to date, we've dramatically enhanced the standard of care in our long-term-care homes. Some 9.55 million hours of additional care is not something to be sneezed at. It has meant 6,000 additional workers at the bedside, enhancing the quality of care for our long-term-care residents, and through the excellent plan laid out by the Minister of Finance and our government yesterday, we will see Ontario moving towards a standard of care that allows for, on average, 3.25 hours of paid care every single day in our long-term-care homes. This will mean more than 4,000 additional individuals helping to deliver care and, dare I say, love alongside that care.

I remind the honourable member that he too has a record. When he was part of an NDP government, that number was 2.25; we're headed to 3.25, and that's as a result of a very good budget yesterday.

Mr. Howard Hampton: With people in our homes for the aged growing older and more frail than ever, maybe the standard needs to change. The only people who haven't figured that out are the McGuinty government, who think six more minutes is some kind of plan.

But I want to ask a further question about this smoke-and-mirrors, shortchange budget. Just a short time ago, the Minister of Finance brought in municipal leaders and said, "Oh, any budget surplus money is going to go to municipalities." Well, then the books were opened yesterday, and there is not going to be any money for

municipalities next year or the year after. So since there is no plan for infrastructure support for municipalities, because there's no foreseeable future surplus, can the Premier tell us, when is he going to fill in the municipal infrastructure cracks that are obviously in this budget?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Jim Watson: It's obvious that the leader of the NDP did not read the budget, because this government has announced substantial new dollars for infrastructure for municipalities. In fact it was a billion-dollar announcement. Maybe to the NDP a billion dollars is not a lot, but let me read you two quotes from two mayors. David Miller, mayor of Toronto: "This budget is very good news. It invests where we need investment." The mayor of my home town, Larry O'Brien: "I think the province took a well-balanced, sensible approach."

Time and time again, we've heard from AMO and other municipal leaders, including the mayor of Mississauga, that this is a well-received budget, for the simple reason that for years, under the two previous governments, they ignored the municipal sector, they ignored infrastructure. This government put a billion dollars into municipal infrastructure this year alone, and we're very proud of that.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: The question remains, where is the plan?

But I also want to ask about the 200,000 Ontarians who lost their manufacturing and resource jobs and how they are also being shortchanged by the McGuinty government, a McGuinty government that rejects a 50% Buy Ontario strategy—meanwhile the United States has a 60% Buy America strategy—and workers who were looking for some kind of incentive to keep manufacturing in Ontario. New Democrats outlined a plan for Buy Ontario and a plan for a refundable manufacturing investment tax credit. I want to ask the Premier: Where is the Premier's plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, as the leader of the NDP knows, of the billions of dollars that we're putting in the public transit sector, fully 82% of those dollars will be devoted to the Ontario economy to create Ontario jobs—82%—so he can hold that up against the 60% buy USA program any time he wants.

We are helping manufacturing, in particular, in a very practical and pragmatic and immediate way. He will know that his colleagues to his right, physically and philosophically, have asked that we simply cut taxes in a dramatic fashion. I can tell you that what we've done is something that is actually going to benefit manufacturers in an immediate sense. When we retroactively eliminate the capital tax to January 2007, as soon as we pass this budget, we can get \$190 million out the door by way of rebates. That's real help when manufacturers need it, right now.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Once again, the response of the McGuinty government is a one-time dollop of money. What manufacturers are saying is, they need a strategy which is going to lead to further investment and allow them to survive.

I also want to ask about the fact that the Premier's jobs plan seems to be a jobs training plan—except, it's only a jobs training plan for 20,000 unemployed workers. I want to ask the Premier, what about the other 180,000 manufacturing and resource workers who've lost their jobs? What happens to them, since there are only retraining funds for 20,000 workers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the NDP does know that, in fact, we're ahead 450,000 net new jobs. Most of the folks who are losing their jobs are finding other jobs. What we want to do is create better opportunities for them so that rather than taking a job that helps them get by, they get a job that will help them get ahead.

In the past, what we have done through successive governments of all political stripes is urge people who've lost a job to take the first and next job that becomes available. What we're saying is—and this is not an easy thing for a 43-year-old to do—if you're prepared to go back to school for a year or two, we want to create the long-term training opportunity for you to do that.

If it costs us \$25,000, for example, to ensure that we help provide you with the support you need for your tuition, for your transportation costs and for other costs associated with pursuing that training, we will be there for you. We think \$20,000, given our history in this province, is dramatic. It's extraordinary. It's exactly what many of our workers are looking for.

Mr. Howard Hampton: The question was about the 180,000 laid-off manufacturing and resource sector workers who are not going to be covered by your training plan. What happens to them? The mayor of Windsor suggested last week that maybe they need to get a direct flight to fly out to Saskatoon or Alberta. He, at least, is thinking of a plan.

My question to the Premier, again, is this: What is your plan for the 180,000 resource and manufacturing workers who have lost their jobs and who are not going to be covered by your \$20,000 retraining plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I find it passing strange that the leader of the NDP would not be supportive of a program, in times of fiscal constraint, whereby we invest in our single greatest natural resource: our people.

I can't believe that the leader of the NDP does not support a program that puts confidence in, faith in, our hope and aspirations in, the people of Ontario: 20,000 long-term training opportunities at a cost of some \$355 million. In addition to that, we are taking our complement of apprenticeships from originally 19,000 to 32,500 people. We now have 100,000 more young people going on to college and university. We have 10,000 more young people graduating from high school.

Anybody who takes a careful look at our policies, particularly in the face of an economic challenge, under-

stands that we have confidence in, and we continue to place faith in, the people of Ontario.

1420

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: My question is to the Minister of Finance. According to your budget of yesterday, your government will have increased our provincial debt by over \$19 billion during your mandate. The total debt has gone up by \$19 billion. This government keeps announcing new buildings, new highways, new infrastructure, but instead of paying for these projects, his government keeps placing mortgages on them. That means that future taxpayers—our children and grandchildren—will have to pay off the principal plus the interest on this new debt. Financial consultants advise the average citizen, the homeowner, "If you receive money, pay off some of your mortgage." Why don't you take this advice and use some of the extra \$5 billion you got this year from the taxpayers to pay off some of our mortgage?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We are paying off \$600 million of provincial debt. That's in the budget. I'll remind the member that they borrowed every single cent of their tax cuts which is on our debt, which we're paying interest on. We just don't think that's an appropriate public policy.

I would also remind the member that since this government took office, both the GDP-to-net-debt ratio and the GDP to accumulated deficits have gone down dramatically. That has been cited by bond rating agencies, and it speaks to a balanced approach to the challenges in our economy today that sees us making proper investments in public services that are essential to the people of Ontario. It sees us paying down debt and, yes, targeting tax cuts to help our manufacturing and resource economies.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Mr. Speaker, while he may be paying down the debt by \$600 million, he's adding \$5.5 billion of new debt to the books this year. Yesterday in his statement to this Legislature, he bragged about this being his third consecutive balanced budget and that they are projecting into the future six budgets altogether—a feat not matched since 1908. I ask the minister: Would he not agree that if he were keeping the books the same way as they have been for the last 100 years and not changed them most recently, and he was operating on a cash basis, instead of having a \$600-million surplus he would have an over \$4-billion deficit?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It was actually the Accounting Standards Board of Canada that changed the rules, and we're happy signatories to those changes. I would remind the member that in addition to paying down debt, we are using year-end money and we are using surpluses to invest in infrastructure, which is extremely important to the economy: roads, bridges, sewers, transit, housing. I'd ask the member: What would he not do in that circumstance?

I'd finally remind the member that in his last year of office, the debt-to-GDP ratio was 25.2%. It is down by almost a third to 17.6%, and we are targeting a rate of 16.2% by 2010-11. That is the way governments should be properly run: invest in people, invest in infrastructure, balance budgets, reduce debt and lower business taxes.

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Premier: The Premier will know that there are several members of the Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug First Nation here today, and Ardoch First Nation. Under the McGuinty government, First Nation leaders have been forced to defend their aboriginal rights and traditional lands in court and through peaceful protests. The response of the McGuinty government has been to put the leaders of these First Nation communities in jail. Why? Because the McGuinty government has failed to live up to its constitutional obligation to consult and accommodate these First Nations.

My question to the Premier is this: If there is a new relationship with First Nations, as maintained by your government, why do you continue to put First Nation leaders in jail when they're simply standing up for their constitutional rights?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm going to take the first part of this question and give the supplementary to my colleague. I want to take this because, frankly, I find that what the leader of the NDP is suggesting is offensive. There is an independent judiciary; there is an independent judicial process. The result of that process is not something that is dictated, governed, influenced in any particular way by our government. And he knows better than that.

For him—I mean, especially as the former Attorney General—to continue to insist that somehow we have manipulated the judiciary to result in the incarceration of some particular Ontarians is completely wrong, and he should not continue to make those offensive kinds of allegations. They are unbecoming.

Mr. Howard Hampton: Premier: Today's date, you received a letter from representatives of those First Nations. Here is the point that they make. In both cases, the McGuinty government gave permits to mining companies without consulting and accommodating the First Nations. In both cases, when First Nations were forced to take legal action and peaceful protest—in the face of this—government lawyers representing Ontario supported the mining industry's legal manoeuvres at every stage. It is those legal manoeuvres which have resulted in the incarceration of the leadership.

Now, Premier, the First Nations have put a very reasonable proposal to you: "We call on you to support the unconditional release of our leaders and negotiators. We also call on you to accept the proposal made to you by Ardoch" First Nation "on January 11, 2008, and by KI on January 17, 2008...." Will you do that, Premier? Or is

it your intention to continue to support the legal manoeuvres of the mining companies?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Not only, obviously, did the government not have a hand in their incarceration, but the Attorney General's agent, the crown attorney, opposed their incarceration. We were against the incarceration. You've surely seen the transcript. I know the member has seen the transcript and, as a former Attorney General, he will know that the crown would take a position in court to this effect.

That's why this government doubled the budget for aboriginal affairs in the budget of yesterday. That's why, in fact, since Dalton McGuinty became the Premier of Ontario, the aboriginal affairs ministry budget tripled. That's why this government entered into an agreement that saw \$3 billion going to First Nations over the next 25 years. There is a new relationship with First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, and I look forward to working with leaders in the future in order to forge an even better one.

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Since 1996, travel in the GTA has increased by more than 20%, with approximately eight million automobile trips made on an average day. With Mississauga now recognized as Canada's sixth-largest and fastest-growing major city, I believe that the increases on Mississauga roads exceed the 20% average. That means more cars, more congestion and the need for greater public transit.

I understand that yesterday's budget included funding for the second round of projects recommended by Metrolinx; I believe the first round occurred in the fall economic statement. We are pleased by the work of Metrolinx and by Mississauga's representation on the board by Her Worship Hazel McCallion.

However, recently the Leader of the Opposition has commented on how money will not start to flow until 2011 for any projects, and how the public will not see results of this in the foreseeable future. My question: Would the minister clarify this and highlight for the residents of my community when this money will in fact flow and how it will be a benefit to them?

1430

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for a question from somebody who uses public transit very often.

I want to say that this government has delivered on an important platform commitment by establishing Metrolinx, which is a GTA-wide seamless transit system. They have two lists of projects for more than \$800 million. I'm not sure where the leader of the official opposition got his statistics. He has the disadvantage of being outside of this House—that may be it—but he has them wrong.

I want to say that what this actually means for all Mississauga residents is the development of transit corri-

dors on both Dundas and Hurontario, with \$26.5 million flowing by June 30; and funding for the Mississauga Transitway hub, which will connect Mississauga Transit with the TTC through a \$39-million investment expansion of the GO Transit rail fleet along the GO Lakeshore corridor with an investment of \$60 million for 20 new bi-level passenger coaches, which means more passengers and less crowding.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary, the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Transit is a big concern for my constituents of Hamilton Mountain, as well as for all Hamilton residents. We welcomed the announcement of the Move Ontario 2020 initiative last summer by the Premier. We were pleased to have seen Metrolinx given the responsibility of implementing these projects.

It is great to see how there was funding from yesterday's budget and from December's fall economic statement to help the residents of Mississauga get out of their cars and into public transit, but I would like to know what is being committed to help my constituents of Hamilton Mountain, along with all of the residents of the city of Hamilton. I'm hoping the Minister of Transportation can inform the residents of Hamilton how funding from the fall economic statement and from yesterday's budget will benefit us in Hamilton.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Transit is a McGuinty government priority. Through yesterday's budget, we have committed to funding all the projects recommended by Metrolinx. This includes funding for the James Street North GO station in Hamilton—the gateway to Niagara, I might add. Once completed, this station is going to be the gateway for GO service to Niagara.

Other improvements that I am sure the member is interested in include the creation of a bus rapid transit A-line along the Upper James corridor, which will include service to the Hamilton International Airport, with an investment of \$12.4 million flowing by June 30 this year. We've also invested \$17.4 million into bus rapid transit improvements to the B-line on the King-Main corridor, funding which will also flow by June 30 of this year. These are improvements that the residents of Hamilton will find will be very good for them and for those who visit Hamilton. The city officials, I know, will be delighted to hear that news.

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Finance. In January, Prime Minister Harper announced \$357 million in the Community Development Trust to retrain Ontario workers. On page 69 of Ontario's budget yesterday, the minister says that the federal government money will be used to "include new skills training centres to provide up-to-date training for Ontario's unemployed workers who require skills upgrading." Can the minister confirm to this House that the entire \$355 million allocated in the budget for the Second Career

strategy is actually repackaged federal money from the Community Development Trust?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I can acknowledge is that, indeed, the community development money is in the entire training package. As I said in my statement to the media yesterday and I said today, it represents about a quarter of the overall investment and it shows what you can do when you partner with the federal government. It shows what you can do. That's why this morning I asked Mr. Flaherty to put aside the rhetoric; let us meet. We don't agree with Mr. Flaherty and the leadership he has taken over there in terms of corporate tax cuts, but we all have to sit down and work together. That's what Ontarians want. We'll work with them for the betterment of our economy and the people of this province.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister moved money from right to left, repackaged the money and gave the federal government's program a nice new name.

Let's look at the facts. The federal government invested \$357 million for retraining in Ontario in January; yesterday's budget included \$355 million for Second Career training. It's unbelievable that the finance minister would spend so much time in his speech yesterday condemning and picking a fight with the federal government, when one of his major budget claims is being wholly funded by the federal government.

What is his share of the partnership? And can he tell this House why, after he criticized the federal government, he repackaged their money and then used it for his own Second Career strategy initiative?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I again want to acknowledge the federal contribution to our skills-to-jobs training strategy.

I might ask the member opposite if she would make representations to the federal government to see if they will partner with us to make sure Ontarians get fairly treated for employment insurance. I wonder if she might partner with us to see if the federal government will give equal per capita health care funding for Ontario today, instead of 2014. I wonder if she and her colleagues opposite will join us in seeing if the federal government will partner with us to make sure Ontario municipalities aren't called pothole fixers, but are treated the same way municipalities in other parts of the country are. Will she join us? Will she stand up for Ontario?

LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Premier, can you indicate when Ontario's poorest families, those who are on ODSP and Ontario Works, can expect to receive the paltry 2% increase that was in yesterday's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The ODSP and OW money will flow in the fall of this year. The computer system, as the member knows, causes us difficulty in getting that money out. But it is the intention that that increase will flow by this fall.

Mr. Michael Prue: As I can take from your answer, this government has not only shortchanged our neediest families—there's no end to the clawback, there's a paltry 20 cents a day for poor schoolchildren to eat at school—but now we're being told that this lousy 2% won't even happen until the fall. So in fact, they're only getting a 1% increase. Can the government not implement that increase—if it's only going to be 2%, can you not do it today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Number one, I would remind the member that this government has increased these benefits by 27% since taking office. Number two, I would remind the member opposite that each year these benefits flow in the fall, so it is an annual increase year over year in the fall.

Our investments yesterday, whether you're talking about investments in dental care for children, \$100 million for social housing renewal, or doubling the amount of money for student nutrition, represent a down payment on our goal to reduce poverty, particularly for children.

There is more to do, and this government is committed to doing more over the course of its mandate.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Affordable housing is a priority issue for many communities across Ontario, including those in my riding of Ottawa Centre. I'm continually approached by community organizations that are working diligently to advance affordable housing solutions for the people of Ottawa Centre. We know that low-income families depend on affordable housing.

I had the chance to tour Ottawa Community Housing to see first-hand why strong and significant investment in affordable housing must be a priority for our government. In that regard, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing enlighten us as to what progress has been made in addressing the short supply of affordable housing units in the Ottawa area?

1440

Hon. Jim Watson: I was very pleased when Minister Duncan announced in yesterday's budget that \$100 million will be going into affordable housing programs throughout the province of Ontario. In our hometown, the city of Ottawa, \$8.2 million will be delivered to the city of Ottawa by March 31.

I want to commend the honourable member for his advocacy on behalf of those people looking for affordable housing. In particular, I want to point out a very exciting project that is taking place, and I suspect that ground will be broken this year: the Beaver Barracks project next to the YMCA on Argyle Avenue. That's part of the affordable housing program signed by the previous federal government and the McGuinty government. We look forward to doing even more with affordable housing advocates with that \$100 million. I thank the member for his advocacy on behalf of the people of Ottawa.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I would like to thank the minister for his response. I know the city of Ottawa appreciates

the support. But from meeting with councillors in my riding, I know they continue to face budget pressures. From infrastructure pressures to transit, Ottawa faces tough decisions every day, just like this provincial government does.

Minister, I know the previous Tory provincial government slashed taxes, closed hospitals and dumped the problems on municipalities. They took the easy way out instead of rolling up their sleeves and putting in the hard work to build partnerships that benefit Ontarians. How is this government's approach benefiting Ottawa?

Hon. Jim Watson: We're back in the partnership business with municipalities throughout the province of Ontario after years of the previous government picking fights with municipality after municipality. I'm very proud to be part of a cabinet and a team of government members that has invested, this year alone, \$27 million to upgrade transit services in the city of Ottawa. Ottawa will receive \$36 million in provincial gas tax funds and \$10.1 million in OMPF funding.

As a result of the Premier's announcement at the AMO conference in Ottawa, we began the uploading of the Ontario drug plan, and that will save the city of Ottawa and its property taxpayers \$15 million this year. Eventually, over the course of the next three years, when ODSP is uploaded—and I know the opposition doesn't know the word "upload" because they're very good at downloading—this will save the city of Ottawa \$60 million. That's in addition to uploading land ambulance costs at 50-50 and public health costs at 75%. We're back in the partnership business with the city of Ottawa and all municipalities in this province.

DEVELOPMENT FEES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: Minister, as you know, builders on the Grand River are having their projects held up by the Haudenosaunee Development Institute unless they pay money to HDI. According to the Criminal Code of Canada, "extortion" is defined as one who "with intent to obtain anything, by threats, accusations, menaces or violence induces or attempts to induce any person ... to do anything or cause anything to be done." Minister, do these actions by HDI not fit the legal definition of "extortion" as in the Criminal Code?

Hon. Michael Bryant: The good news is that it's not MPPs in the Legislature who interpret the Criminal Code; it's police and prosecutors who interpret the Criminal Code. So I will not do so, and I'm surprised that the member would continue to do so, notwithstanding the Ipperwash commission findings.

One of the untold stories about what is happening in that part of the province is the work that is being done by MPP Dave Levac. Not only is Mr. Levac bringing the community together through meetings that I've spoken of before, but he's constantly on the telephone with municipal leaders, with business leaders in the community. He's talking with Six Nations; he's talking with every-

body. He's trying to come up with solutions, something that that member should be trying to do as well.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The police are not laying charges. Spring is upon us, the frost is out of the ground, and builders have their employees and bulldozers ready to go. These builders don't know how to handle HDI. It seems to them like a no-win situation. If they pay the application fee of up to \$7,000, what are the subsequent development fees? If they pay those fees, who do they rely on? Who is going to let them know whether they own their land or not, and whether they will be protested or not by perhaps yet another native group? We know the police are not laying charges.

My question to you is, what is your government doing about this extortion by HDI?

Hon. Michael Bryant: I will say this about that: The member knows, or ought to know, that the only development fees that ought to be paid by anyone in this province are those that one would pay to the local municipality. In fact, if there's anybody who suggests that any other fees ought to be paid, it is our recommendation that they absolutely, obviously, not pay it.

Secondly, what are we going to do? We have to bring a solution to this 200-year-old dispute between the federal government on the one hand and Six Nations on the other hand. That's why the province is at the table doing that. That's why I was speaking with Chief McNaughton and Chief Montour on this very subject on Monday, and I'll be speaking with them again later this afternoon on that, as I continue to speak to the mayor of Brantford as well. We'll keep on trying to find solutions and we won't give up.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: My question is for the Premier, and it is also about yesterday's shortchange budget. The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors believes this budget means that residents in long-term care will receive an extra five minutes of daily hands-on care. Is an extra five minutes of care a day the revolution in long-term care promised by the McGuinty Liberals?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. George Smitherman: I'm pleased to have a chance to answer this question again and to repeat some of the numbers, since that's at the heart of budgets and at the heart of our initiative with respect to long-term care. Everybody agrees that enhancing the standards of long-term care is important. The difference between us and those parties is that we're showing it by actual investment. Some 9.55 million hours of additional care had been added before yesterday's budget, and as a result of the initiatives over the next several years, we'll be adding nearly five million additional hours of care. This will take us from the standard at present of 2.94 hours per average paid care per day to 3.25, and will represent more than 4,500 additional workers providing care in the long-term-care environment. This builds on 6,000

additional workers who have been added to date and represents a very substantial budgetary increase as we enhance the circumstances for residents in our long-term-care homes.

M^{me} France G  linas: The Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors has also done the number crunching. I'll read a quote from Donna Rubin, the CEO of OANHSS: "We're slipping backward, not moving forward, and that's bitterly disappointing for the 76,000 long-term-care residents" and their families "who were expecting more."

Does the Premier think our loved ones in long-term care deserve better than five extra minutes of care?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think it's very important to have investments that also reflect our capacity from a health human resources and from a financial standpoint. It is not possible to flood the marketplace with opportunity in long-term care without stealing those workers from the home care sector. As an example, here's what Janet Lambert, the head of the Ontario Long-Term Care Association, said yesterday: "Overall, the budget represents a significant commitment to the sector in the context of the current economic realities." She further said, "We believe today's budget is a response to the voice of residents and families and a signal of the important role of long-term care in our health care system."

All across health care we've made investments which reflect the interdependency of different parts of the system and, accordingly, we're very proud that the investments we've made to date have added almost 10 million hours of care. We're going to continue to build on that to enhance the circumstances for residents in our long-term-care homes.

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. The people of Mississauga-Brampton South benefit greatly from the large amount of pharmaceutical production that takes place in my riding. Mississauga in particular has experienced incredible growth in our biotechnology and pharmaceutical centre, which doubled from 192 companies to well over 400 from 1990 to 2001. In fact, these companies employ more than 20,000 people and continue to be an important part of the economy.

1450

The global pharmaceutical market is estimated to be worth over \$534 billion a year. It provides high-paying jobs for families, develops life-saving medications and saves our health care system money through developing new preventive treatments. What is the Ministry of Research and Innovation doing to encourage the growth of this major research and manufacturing industry here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague the member for Mississauga-Brampton South. Her riding represents one of the largest concentrations of the biopharmaceutical industry, not only here in Ontario, but

throughout North America, and I want to thank her for her tireless advocacy for that industry.

I want you to know that our government believes in the importance of the biopharmaceutical industry and the fact that it is so research-intensive. It employs over 9,000 people in Ontario with some great-paying jobs. There are some 10,000 scientists, at some 25 academic and research hospitals across the province, who benefit from the biopharmaceutical industry and their investment of some \$550 million in R&D. We believe that is a wonderful industry that we can partner with. That's why I was so pleased in January to announce the \$150-million biopharmaceutical investment program, part of our \$1.15-billion Next Generation of Jobs Fund. It's driving good-paying jobs right here in Ontario.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Minister, some on the opposition benches take a negative view of Ontario's ability to compete in the global economy. I know, as a government, we don't have the luxury of being pessimistic. We believe in Ontario and its ability to compete. Can you please outline for the benefit of opposition members the positive steps we are taking through our biopharmaceutical strategy to build on our strengths, while investing in the future, to create jobs here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: Far be it from me to lecture that very unified caucus over there, but I find it passing strange that the leader of their party said when I announced this, "This is a bad approach to the economy"—but then what did the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Runciman, say when the federal budget came out? He said that he was impressed with the federal budget, which is filled with industry-specific investments, including the automotive, farming and fishing sectors, because he believes "it will position the country well for economic growth." It was a jewel in the crown. Who should we believe? The Minister of Research and Innovation, who stands by the biopharmaceutical industry and believes passionately—with people like Dr. Janet Rossant, who's the head of research at Sick Kids, who says, "Incentives like this new biopharmaceutical investment program will ensure that partnerships between industry and researchers in Ontario continue to build a strong knowledge-based economy that will create jobs and improve the health of our population."

We're very consistent on this side of the House. We believe in 21st-century—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

EASTERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, last year your candidates and colleagues campaigned throughout eastern Ontario on an ironclad promise to deliver \$80 million over the next four years, \$20 million a year beginning this year, for the eastern Ontario development fund. In yesterday's budget, there is not a mention of a single penny for it. The Eastern Ontario

Wardens' Caucus is counting on this funding. They were expecting this was an ironclad promise. They expect \$20 million now. Premier, why are you not keeping this promise?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Jim Watson: We're very proud of that commitment that we made in the budget. Number one, it doubles what the federal contribution was for eastern Ontario. Secondly, unlike your party, we actually believe in consulting local community leaders in eastern Ontario. We asked, through our eastern Ontario caucus, the eastern Ontario wardens and other municipal leaders, including the Municipalities United for a New Deal and the mayors from eastern Ontario, to come together with the proper criteria so that we could put together the best possible economic development package for eastern Ontario.

The previous government cancelled eastern Ontario economic development. We put it back in the budget.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The minister would know that the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus provided them with a very detailed proposal of what they need in that fund, and you promised that it would be in this budget. They submitted this proposal, but there's no money in this budget for the eastern Ontario development fund. You have ignored their wishes on the gas tax. You have ignored their wishes on this fund. If you're going to change the position today and indicate that yes, there is \$20 million this year, we'd love to hear about it, and the wardens of eastern Ontario counties would like to hear about it, because they want to know one thing: While they continue to insist that their fiscal condition has deteriorated under your regime, they want to know why you continue to insist on shortchanging people in eastern Ontario who need this assistance badly.

Hon. Jim Watson: It's passing strange: The same party that wants to cut \$5 billion through corporate taxes gets up on their feet and asks for more money for different parts of the province. It's the ultimate oxymoron. It's like jumbo shrimp or Progressive Conservative; you can't have it both ways. This is in the budget; it's under the Ministry of Economic Development. It's on page 40—four, zero. I'd encourage the member to look in the budget, page 40.

We've been out consulting with the wardens. We asked them for that report so that we could make sure we have the best possible advice from economic development officers, from the wardens, from the municipal leaders, from the business community. That money will be delivered to eastern Ontario. After the Conservative government cut the funding years ago, it's back on the radar screen under the leadership of our Premier.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Housing, and it is a straightforward one: Why is there not one dollar in this budget for new-build affordable housing when there are 125,000 households waiting for it?

Hon. Jim Watson: The honourable member is correct: There's not one dollar in the budget; there's \$100 million in the budget. Let me just remind the member, the NDP talk a good line about affordable housing. In their last year in office, they contributed \$52 million; in the last year of the McGuinty government, we have provided over \$150 million to provide for more affordable housing. I want to thank the Minister of Finance and the housing providers for ensuring that this \$100 million will be out the door to municipalities and housing providers by March 31.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the members to welcome former member Mr. Bill Wrye from the riding of Windsor-Sandwich, 32nd, 33rd and 34th Parliaments. Welcome, Bill.

VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to welcome to the Legislature Mr. Shadah Khokhar and members of the Pakistani-Canadian community who are in the House with us today in the east public gallery. They are here having presented to me some 2,000 signatures on a petition which I will table with you, should you give me allowance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park today.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Frank Klees: It gives me great pleasure to in fact table with the House a petition that has been delivered to me, as I said, by Mr. Shadah Khokhar and members of the Canadian-Pakistani community. I read the petition:

"Petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty has called on the Ontario Legislature to consider removing the Lord's Prayer from its daily proceedings;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our parliamentary heritage that was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe;

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer is today a significant part of the religious heritage of millions of Ontarians of culturally diverse backgrounds;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to continue its long-standing practice of using the Lord's Prayer as part of its daily proceedings."

I am pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

1500

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to present a petition that says:

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

This has been signed by people from Thessalon and Sault Ste. Marie. I agree with the petition and have affixed my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario regarding the western Mississauga ambulatory surgery centre:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I send this to you by way of page Alex.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that was sent to me by residents of Meaford and Dan and Cathy Mihalic.

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from daily proceedings in the Ontario Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have signed this.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today regarding children in smoke-free cars, in support of Bill 11:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

Since I agree with this petition, I will affix my signature to it and hand it to Daniel here.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Mr. John Yakabuski: Petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the legacy of Pope John Paul II reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace and the defence of equality and human rights; and

"Whereas his legacy has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions; and

"Whereas, as one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, Pope John Paul II visited Ontario during his pontificate of more than 25 years and, on his visits, was enthusiastically greeted by Ontario's diverse religious and cultural communities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to grant speedy passage into law of the private member's bill by MPP Frank Klees entitled An Act to proclaim Pope John Paul II Day."

I support this petition and send it to the table with Jacqui.

HOME CARE

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am so honoured to be recognized to introduce this petition—just joking.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the following:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding process for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I affix my signature.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is for children and smoke-free cars, in support of Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma,

bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with the petition so I affix my signature on it as well.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I have affixed my signature to this and given it to Magali.

1510

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Kim Craitor: This petition has been submitted to me by a number of long-term-care facilities in my riding—Meadows of Dorchester and Upper Canada Lodge—and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, wish to thank the government of Ontario for listening and acting on

concerns brought to your attention regarding the care of our most precious and most vulnerable citizens, our seniors. These are the people that through hard work, dedication and love created the great province of Ontario.

"We thank the government of Ontario for:

"Increasing funding for long-term care by almost \$800 million, a 38% increase;

"Funding almost 6,100 new full-time staff in long-term-care homes, including 2,300 nurses;

"Creating 1,200 RPN positions in our long-term-care homes, ensuring at least one new registered practical nurse in every one of our 628 homes;

"Opening 7,712 new long-term-care beds;

"Launching a program to redevelop 35,000 older long-term-care beds over the next 10 years, beginning in 2008;

"Introducing new legislation to improve care in long-term-care homes;

"Introducing new regulations requiring 24/7 coverage by a registered nurse and at least two baths per week;

"Increasing the food allowance per resident effective September 1, to ensure that residents are provided with an improved range of nutritional menu options and having all meal plans reviewed and approved by a dietician;

"Introducing a new requirement that, as of December 2005, all long-term-care homes arrange for physiotherapy services for their residents;

"Introducing legislation requiring tougher inspections and more accountability, and providing an action line, a province-wide toll-free information and complaint line, for long-term-care residents and their families;

"Introducing better training for staff, including best-practices guidelines for nurses in LTC homes, such as treating diabetes and preventing falls, and investing \$2.4 million to train front-line staff in how to better care for dementia and related conditions.

"While all of the above have made wonderful improvements to the care of our elderly, there is still much more to be done that could improve the quality of life and preserve the dignity of our parents, grandparents, neighbours and friends.

"LTC homes are admitting people with a greater variety of care needs, including younger care residents with acquired brain injury, multiple sclerosis, Huntington's disease etc.," and other related illnesses, "and our elderly becoming more frail. The level of care has increased so much that it is not possible to provide the level of care identified in Bill 140 with the current staffing funding formula ...

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario to provide funding specifically to be used for the employment of personal support workers. These workers provide much of the daily care to the residents by assisting with personal care, transfers, toileting, bathing and much-needed emotional support. By dedicating funding for the sole employment of personal support workers and by mandating a staff-to-resident ratio accordingly, we would ensure our seniors are receiving proper care."

I'm pleased to sign this petition in support of it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2008 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2008, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): The Chair recognizes the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I haven't had the opportunity to congratulate you on your elevation to the chair. Congratulations. I'm sure you'll do an outstanding job.

I want to say that I appreciate very much the opportunity to respond to the budget on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus. At the outset, I want to indicate that I will be sharing my time, sharing the honour, with my colleague the member for Erie—Lincoln—our party's finance critic, the man always working for you—Tim Hudak.

For several weeks now, the Progressive Conservative caucus has been working with the finance committee of this House, travelling across the province, listening to Ontario's small businesses, families and individuals, and we're hearing the same message from one end of the province to the other: Something is wrong with Ontario, and people are worried. They see jobs disappearing, many of them moving to other provinces. They see businesses shutting their operations, some of them moving away, some of them closing down completely. They see their children and grandchildren moving away to find work in other provinces.

Despite Premier McGuinty's protestations and excuses, this is not a national trend or merely an echo of something going on in the United States. No, unfortunately, the McGuinty government has achieved the unthinkable:

Canada is in its second-longest period of economic expansion in history, yet Ontario's share of national nominal GDP—gross domestic product—has gone down, from 41.3% in 2002 to 38.6% in 2006.

Business investment in Canada—I want to stress that, in Canada—has expanded for the 12th consecutive year in a row, but Ontario's economic growth has been below the national average.

The Canadian unemployment rate is the lowest in 33 years, yet Ontario's unemployment rate was above the national average for the first time in its history in 2007.

Ontario had the second-lowest growth in the country in 2007.

Since 2003, Ontario has lost 71,804 people to other provinces.

Ontario has lost 194,000 manufacturing jobs since July 2004 and counting, regrettably.

When Mr. McGuinty became Premier, Ontario's per capita fiscal capacity was \$400 above the federal equalization standard; it's now only \$84 above that standard. We've gone from \$400 down to \$84 in four years. At this

rate, we will reach have-not status before the end of this government's mandate—a have-not province, Ontario. This has never happened before. That's quite an achievement by the McGuinty government.

When people warn the Premier about have-not status for Ontario, this is what they mean. We are spiralling out of control while this Premier spends more and taxes more, while jobs and business leave the province, and families ask how this has been permitted to happen. This is not a North America problem, this is not a Canada problem, this is an Ontario problem. This is a McGuinty government problem.

This is the sort of problem that could only happen when you apply the tax-and-spend approach to the province's finances, which we haven't seen since the mid-1980s when David Peterson and Bob Rae fired off the one-two punch that knocked Ontario into one of the most disastrous recessionary periods in our history. And with this budget, Dalton McGuinty is rolling out the red carpet for an economic slowdown. It's like he's given up, like he believes a slowdown or, even worse, a recession is inevitable.

If you just look at the budget, the marquee items are designed not to stave off a slowdown, not to turn around a recession, but to give up, hunker down and accept what the Premier apparently believes is inevitable, something he can't fix.

Just look at what the budget offered; it offered clues to what the Premier believes. If he believes more Ontarians are going to need social assistance under his watch, he might spend more on social assistance. That's just what he did. If he believes more Ontarians are going to lose their jobs under his watch, he might throw money at retraining them. That's just what he did. And if he believes more Ontarians are going to trade in their high-paying manufacturing jobs for minimum wage jobs, he might increase the minimum wage by 75 cents, in the hopes they won't be too angry at him. And that's just what he did. He's not just hunkering down, not just giving up, but rolling out the red carpet for an economic slowdown. Everyone can see it.

1520

On the front page of today's *Globe and Mail*, the lead paragraph says, and I'm quoting: "Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty's government is ... battening down the hatches for an economic slowdown."

The *Sun* media, again quoting: "A nervous Ontario is preparing to batten down the hatches"—that phrase again—"as all indicators point to an economic slowdown."

That's the response of this government to challenging times: to batten down the hatches, give up and roll out the red carpet for a slowdown.

The Progressive Conservative Party would suggest that there's another way to deal with challenging times, and that is to face them head-on, to do the thing that always turns economies around, and to never, ever give up on Ontario.

There's a better way, one that doesn't give up on Ontario, and we'll get to that better way in just a moment. At this moment, Ontario is becoming a have-not province. Why? Because Dalton McGuinty is a "cannot" Premier. He cannot lead this province, because he's a bad manager. He's not trustworthy and he seemingly doesn't care.

I'm going to take some time to go through these one by one. It may change your minds.

I'll take "bad manager" first. This is not an opinion; it's math. I'll quickly go over some of those numbers and facts again. They're so serious that they bear repeating.

Under the Premier's bad management, 71,804 people have left Ontario. Over 194,000 manufacturing jobs have vanished since July 2004. Business investment in Ontario is now lower than the national average. Our share of national nominal GDP: down. Our economic growth is below the national average.

To be fair, the Premier has exceeded in one area in particular. Under the Premier's careful management, Ontario is now above the national average in—wait for it—unemployment. Give credit where credit is due.

Not since fellow Liberal Bob Rae sat in the Premier's chair has Ontario seen jobs and citizens fleeing Ontario, recession clouds looming, and a Premier focused on feeding that recession rather than cultivating growth.

So how does one cultivate growth? What one doesn't do is what the Premier has done, and that is tax, spend, and punish job creation, which led to Ontario having the second-lowest growth in the country last year. All five chartered banks ranked Ontario ninth of 10 provinces in economic growth. There's only one rung left on the bottom of the ladder, and the Premier has his eye on it with this budget.

Again, it's not just the Progressive Conservative caucus saying this. I'll quote from today's National Post: "You've got to hand it to Mr. McGuinty and his finance minister, Dwight Duncan. Their fiscal strategy is consistent. When the economy is doing well, keep taxes high and spend big. When the economy is heading into the dumper, keep taxes high and spend big."

It's just like the last Liberal Ontario Premier, Bob Rae. You can't tax your way out of a recession. You can't spend your way out of a recession. You can't throw up your hands, batten down the hatches and give up, like the Premier and the finance minister have done with this budget. No. If you want to beat a recession, if you want to turn things around, if you want to make Ontario a better place, you must cultivate, you must encourage, growth.

So how do you cultivate and encourage growth? I'm glad you asked, Speaker. The Progressive Conservative Party has lots of experience in cleaning up messes left behind by tax-and-spend Liberal Premiers.

The way to cultivate and encourage growth—and I hope you're listening—is to reward growth, not punish it. One way that works every time it's tried is tax cuts. By the way, every time Liberal Premiers like Bob Rae and Mr. McGuinty do the opposite and raise taxes, growth,

jobs and prosperity flee this province. That works every time it's tried, too. Progressive Conservatives would cultivate and encourage growth by lowering the tax burden on those who create growth. Tax cuts create jobs. It works every time it's tried.

The Progressive Conservative Party, if in government, would listen to, as well, despite the rhetoric of the finance minister today to the contrary—we know what he's actually doing—and work with, not whine about, the federal finance minister and cut punishing taxes on job creators.

Interruption.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Did we catch whoever that was? Obviously, it was a Liberal.

As everyone knows, including the Premier, if you want less of something, you tax it more; if you want more of something, you tax it less.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Try paying attention for a change over there; you might learn something.

I say the Premier knows this because he's said it himself and he's done it himself. He says he's on a mission to reduce smoking, so he increased taxes on smoking several times. He wanted less of it, so he taxed it more. So apparently he gets it. The question is, why is the Premier doing to jobs what he did to cigarettes, taxing them out of Ontario?

When Progressive Conservatives were in charge, we cut taxes and jobs went up significantly; over one million new jobs were created in the province of Ontario. It works every time it's tried.

At the federal level, Conservatives are cutting taxes and jobs are up to the highest employment rate Canada has enjoyed in 33 years. It works every time it's tried.

In Ontario, one lonely holdout: a Premier who understands that if you want more of something, like jobs, you tax it less, yet even though he knows it to be true, he can't manage to do it. That's because he's a bad manager.

He's also not trustworthy. He just can't keep his word. The name McGuinty has become synonymous with broken promises. As each of us knows in our personal lives and in our working lives, you cannot trust a promise-breaker because you never know what they're going to do. It makes it hard for investors to set up businesses in Ontario when they can't trust the guy in charge.

Am I being too harsh here? I just want to give you a few examples.

I'm sure you remember when this Liberal government, this McGuinty government, blindsided that famous diamond company De Beers by tripling taxation rates on their new diamond mine. A company executive afterwards said it was like something you'd expect from a banana republic. That's one example.

Another one: How about their promise not to increase taxes? Everyone knows about their 2003 election promise and then bringing in the largest tax increase in the province's history.

One final one: their promise to close coal plants in the province by 2007.

But there's no shortage of material here. We could devote a full speech to promises made and broken.

As I mentioned at the outset, the Premier is a bad manager, not trustworthy; and the third point I made, he seemingly doesn't care.

So how do we know? How do we know he doesn't care? We judge that by his actions. Does he care about the law-abiding citizens of Caledonia, who have had to put up with their situation for two years?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No.

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Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Does he care about the 194,000-plus Ontarians who've lost their manufacturing jobs under his watch? No.

Does he care about 71,804 of our sons, daughters, husbands and grandchildren who've thrown in the towel, forced to leave our once-flourishing province to find work in other provinces? No.

Does he care that, under his watch, under Dalton McGuinty's watch, Ontario's unemployment rate is above the national average? No.

Does he care that Ontario, once the economic engine of Canada, is on the verge of becoming a have-not province under his watch? No.

If he did care, if he genuinely cared, he would do something to make Ontario a better place. He wouldn't batten down the hatches. He wouldn't give up. He would stop taxing and spending—taxing and spending which never, ever works. And he would start doing what always works: cultivating, encouraging and rewarding growth.

A Progressive Conservative budget would have taken steps to restore Ontario's position as Canada's economic leader. We would have done that by reducing the tax burden on business and new business investment. We would have fully eliminated capital taxes in Ontario now. We would have reduced taxes on small business. We would have addressed the very real concerns about future energy supply and pricing. And we would have provided a plan to once and for all eliminate our ballooning infrastructure deficit and set real targets to reduce the regulatory burden on our businesses.

In conclusion, just a few more words: Unlike the Premier, we in the Progressive Conservative Party will never give up on Ontario. We will never punish growth and job creators. We will never sit by while jobs, investment, people and confidence leave this great province. We will never batten down the hatches and wait for an economic slowdown to arrive.

What will we do? We in the Progressive Conservative Party will always work hard for Ontario. We will always reward growth and those who create growth. We will always give investors and job creators a welcome home in Ontario. We will always give workers and their families a welcome home in Ontario, which will give the government more money to spend on those who need it. And we will always, always, do our best to make Ontario

the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

I now pass it to the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I thank my colleague the leader of the official opposition, the member for Leeds—Grenville, for the opportunity to speak to the budget motion. I also commend him for his outstanding remarks that rightly capture the difference between the old-fashioned tax-and-spend approach of the Dalton McGuinty government with the Progressive Conservative approach of opening up Ontario for business investment and creating well-paying jobs once more in what should be Canada's lead province.

What I want to point out too, in support of my colleague's comments, is the extraordinary increase in government spending that has taken place under the Dalton McGuinty government. In fact, they had some additional \$5 billion in revenue that was not anticipated when they tabled their budget last spring. You'd think that some of that \$5 billion would be used to give welcomed and well-deserved tax relief to seniors and working families across the province of Ontario; some tax relief to businesses that are hard-pressed to hire more folks—in fact, we're seeing jobs leave the province, as my colleague outlined; or, as my colleague for Carleton—Mississippi Mills brought up today, maybe some better down payments on the debt instead of the increasing debt, as he mentioned in his question. Instead, almost every penny of that additional \$5-billion windfall was rushed out the door in spending sprees for the economic statement, or over \$2 billion in last-minute spending sprees in the last two weeks of March.

Let's put this into perspective: It took from Confederation, John Sandfield Macdonald, Ontario's first Premier, to Ernie Eves to get government spending up to \$68 billion. In his five years in office, Dalton McGuinty will have brought government spending to some \$96 billion. In terms of how much is spent on government programs, that is up \$28.2 billion since 2003, an absolutely extraordinary 48% increase in government spending.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What are we getting for it?

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke asks, "What are we getting for it?" Certainly, if you're a senior in Glanbrook looking for a long-term-care bed for your spouse, you saw nothing in today's budget. If you're a young person from Pembroke looking for a well-paying job to raise a family and buy a home in Ontario, you saw nothing in this budget. If you're a young mother in downtown Hamilton trying to get your kid to emergency in a short waiting time, you saw nothing in yesterday's budget. My colleague says, "What do you get for the 48% increase in spending?" Certainly not much to brag about if I were a member of the Liberal caucus.

To put that further into perspective, the 48% increase in government program spending: We often talk about Bob Rae. I guess he was, after all, a Liberal Premier with an orange puff in his jacket pocket. Bob Rae increased

program spending by—Dalton McGuinty was 48%. What do you think Bob Rae did over his five years?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: About 47.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Bob Rae had a 15% program spending increase. We talk about Bob Rae being the king of runaway spending; Dalton McGuinty has almost tripled it.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Do you know what? The gold medal winner previously in Ontario's history for program spending increases was the David Peterson government. In his five years in office, David Peterson increased program spending by 46%. So Dalton McGuinty has actually left David Peterson and Bob Rae's big-spending, big-government approaches in the dust with his 48% increase in his five years in office.

The other challenge is the fact that while revenues are up \$5 billion in the past fiscal year, they've spent all of that money. If the economy continues to decline, as my colleague outlined some major concerns already where Ontario stands last or second-to-last in Confederation—I think TD recently said that 0.5% is the expected growth rate ahead—Dalton McGuinty has given himself very little, if any, wiggle room because he has spent all of that additional money that has come into the provincial coffers.

You would think that some form of economic stimulus like we have called for—lower taxes for businesses, working families and seniors—would help to get our economy back on track. Dalton McGuinty, by spending all of that money, has taken away all of his room to manoeuvre if the economy continues to go downhill.

Where does that money all come from, the increase in expenditures by some 48%? Mostly it comes from the wallets of hard-pressed families and seniors in Ontario and from businesses struggling to make ends meet in the face of international competition. Similarly, there have been substantial increases from the federal government into Ontario coffers. My colleague for Nepean—Carleton caught the Minister of Finance's hand in the cookie jar today, trying to take credit for what was actually a transfer from the federal government. He talks about wanting a partnership; I don't know if I would enter into much of a partnership with the finance minister if he tries to take credit for somebody else's good work.

In those two areas, revenues have increased, but they have spent it all. What has been the impact? As my colleague indicated, almost 200,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs have fled the province of Ontario. Some 70,000 talented individuals have left Ontario and now call Saskatchewan, BC, Manitoba or Alberta their home.

Shockingly, welfare recipients are actually up 11% under the Dalton McGuinty government. That was actually after the previous PC government had reduced the welfare rolls by over half a million people, getting them back into the workforce, productive lives in society, and Dalton McGuinty now has reversed that trend and increased the welfare rolls by some 11%.

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The only thing that wasn't leaked in yesterday's budget was the funding for job training. The question that people are asking, from Stoney Creek to Ottawa to Kenora, is, job training for what? What jobs exactly are they being trained for? When you see 200,000 well-paying jobs leave to other areas, you wonder where folks are going to find work. And it's 20,000 positions, mind you—the 200,000 jobs already lost and banks projecting potentially 200,000 more.

We saw one solution in the finance minister's backyard: Air Duncan. We'll call it Air Duncan, which proposes to fly unemployed workers from Windsor to Saskatoon and other cities to find work and fly them home on weekends to stay with their families. Certainly we don't expect it, but it may be a reasonable conclusion that we'll actually be training workers for other provinces, because these guys have failed to create any jobs in the province of Ontario. Instead, they should have prioritized job creation, making sure there are well-paying jobs out there before the retraining initiatives, or at least done it at the same time.

The other result of this overspending, high taxation and higher energy price policy is that Ontario is now heading potentially for have-not status. It's not just Bob Runciman saying that and it's not just me saying that. Don Drummond, the chief economist for TD, said that it's not so far from being an equalization province, referring to the province of Ontario. Douglas Porter, the deputy chief economist of the Bank of Montreal, said, "While the arcane equalization calculations may still peg Ontario officially as a 'have' province, the reality is far less friendly for the provincial economy—Ontario is becoming relatively poorer each year."

It's hard to contemplate that an Ontario we've always known as the engine of Canada, a place where people from St. John's, Newfoundland or Victoria, BC, would come to, to raise a family, to get a good job, to own a home, could possibly become a have-not province because of their outdated tax-and-spend policies. Imagine that: The lasting legacy of a Dalton McGuinty government could very well be taking Ontario from a leader in Canada to a have-not province.

The other impact is on job creation. Let me give you a couple of statistics here, and I want to thank my colleagues Ted Arnott, Toby Barrett and others who joined the finance committee in helping prepare our dissenting report. What we point out is that while the McGuinty members try to brag about the number of jobs created—it's 400,000 or so, which is actually a dismal record compared to the rest of the provinces—

Mr. John Yakabuski: One million.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As my colleague from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke points out, the previous PC government, with a forward-looking economic policy, created a business environment that saw some one million net new jobs created in Ontario during its mandate.

We point out that over half of the new jobs that Dalton McGuinty and his crew brag about have been in the

public sector. Of that 400,000, some 225,000, to be precise, are public sector jobs. Government jobs themselves don't create wealth; they are simply a transfer from the private sector. The real test of an economy's performance is private sector job creation, which is considerably lacking in Ontario. Consider this: From 2004 until the end of 2007, Ontario added an average of 51,000 public sector jobs per year; the total number of private sector jobs, 11,425. That is about a 5% increase in government jobs and less than a 1% annual increase in private sector jobs. That is simply not sustainable. Again, the total number of private sector jobs over their mandate: about 112,000. Across the eight years of PC government, from 1996 to 2003, private sector jobs expanded by an average of 109,000 jobs per year.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Ten times as much.

Mr. Tim Hudak: My colleague says, "Ten times as much." So per year is greater, or about the same, as the total jobs the Liberals have created over the four years.

So what do you do about it? Well, we had hoped that yesterday, and maybe still, Dalton McGuinty would reject the old-fashioned approach of tax-and-spend government—ballooning the size of government, runaway spending, raising taxes on the backs of seniors, families and businesses—that has chased jobs out of our province. You'd think he would have learned from previous Premiers Bob Rae and David Peterson who catapulted Ontario into its deepest recession since the Second World War.

Sadly, in yesterday's budget, an extraordinary opportunity to reverse that trend, Dalton McGuinty made no attempt to stimulate the economy or create well-paying jobs in the province of Ontario.

So what have the Progressive Conservatives called for in that budget, in that report? As my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, the Leader of the Opposition, had indicated, we have called for lower taxes to our business sector—now the highest in all of North America, thanks to Dalton McGuinty—to help stimulate job creation and investment in our province, lowering the tax burden on both small and large businesses; as both my colleague Mr. Runciman and John Tory have said, "lowering the red tape burden," because the amount of red tape and regulation that comes out of this government is abso-

lutely incredible. It's throttling entrepreneurship and innovation in Ontario.

We've called for Ontario families and seniors, the hard-working families who have seen higher taxes, higher user fees, higher hydro rates and higher utilities, to finally get a break from this government.

We've also called for an address of the looming energy crisis with a responsible plan to increase our energy supply to make sure we can remain competitive. It used to be a strength of the province of Ontario. Now we have the second-highest energy costs in competitive states and provinces.

I would encourage members, if they haven't had a chance, to look at the dissenting report, listen to what John Tory has said and listen to what Bob Runciman said a bit earlier on. That is a recipe to turn our economy around, to start creating jobs again in Ontario, to bring economic opportunities to young people or to people who will lose their jobs in the manufacturing sector to find well-paying jobs to help provide for their families. I fear, if Dalton McGuinty continues down the old-fashioned tax-and-spend approach, that his legacy will be to take Ontario from a leader in Confederation to a have-not province, from the economic engine to the caboose.

I do hope that, in the debate coming up, the members opposite will listen to the solid advice from this province, and also that it has been successful—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Quebec are attracting jobs out of Ontario—to turn things around and again bring hope and opportunity to working families and taxpayers in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour? The motion carries.

Debate adjourned.

Hon. Jim Watson: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Andrea Horwath): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? All those in favour? Any opposed? It carries.

The House adjourned at 1547.

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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 27 March 2008

Jeudi 27 mars 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 March 2008

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 mars 2008

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT (NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATIONS), 2008 LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES (PERSONNES MORALES À BUT NON LUCRATIF)

Ms. Horwath moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to limit the approval of corporations to not for profit corporations / *Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin de limiter l'agrément de personnes morales aux personnes morales à but non lucratif.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Ms. Horwath, you have up to 10 minutes.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I wanted to start out by saying that I truly believe that all members of this House would agree that children are our future. In fact, I'm sure that every single one of you has either used that phrase before or certainly has nodded in agreement when you've heard that used by someone else. I put to you that as members of this place, we actually have an obligation to Ontario's youngest children, an obligation that says we must do everything in our power to ensure that they are given every chance, every support, every tool that we as a society can provide to ensure that the mantle they take on, that mantle of our future, is something that they can handle with every bit of success that they, as individuals and as groups of people, are capable of achieving.

How do we do that? I would put to you that we do that by ensuring that the programs and services that we provide are of the highest quality, of the greatest calibre, ensuring that our system of early learning and care is befitting of a province like Ontario; ensuring that we have a child care system that delivers a universal, accessible, affordable, developmentally appropriate environment for our children in their most important and formative years.

Members in this place may be surprised to learn that there is not a system like that currently here in Ontario.

In fact, there is no system per se of child care in Ontario. Ontario continues to have a patchwork of services scattered across the province that has little consistency, accessibility and availability in fees, in educational programming and in staffing quality. Sadly, there is no current policy, no current proactive approach in Ontario, to ensure that we get to where we need to be to equip our children with the tools that we can provide to ensure their success. I hope that by the end of this debate, members will see fit to support this bill; to allow it to continue to the committee stage in order for a fulsome consultation and discussion to take place.

I also want to make sure that members are very clear about what this bill does and doesn't do. It does amend the Day Nurseries Act to restrict future child care licences to the not-for-profit sector. I emphasize the word "future." It does not in any way threaten the existing for-profit child care providers across the province who are currently operating licensed child care centres. It does not require families to participate in child care. It does not insinuate a removal of resources from other kinds of care. It is a very short, very simple, very specific bill that does one thing and one thing only: It amends the Day Nurseries Act to provide that future licensing of child care centres is restricted to the not-for-profit sector only. That's it, period; that's the bill.

So why, you might ask, is this important? Very simply, it's important because it's a fundamental time for child care in Ontario right now. It's an historic time for child care in Ontario. The reality is that the bill, in large part, deals with the issue of quality and a sub-issue of timing.

There is an article that was published about a year ago, when the Early Years Study 2 came out, and it speaks to why quality child care is so important. I thought it was important to share that with members. The article was in the Record, and it says:

"A growing body of worldwide research shows clearly that investing in early child programs before age three produces dramatic long-term results, not only for better child learning, but also for lower crime and fewer physical and mental health problems later.

"And the cost savings are enormous, with one study estimating that society saves more than \$17 for every dollar invested in early childhood programs"—17 to 1: that's the value of investing in quality early childhood development programs.

The article goes on to talk about specific studies that were done in particular communities, but I fear I'm going

to run out of time, so I'll leave those studies for people to look up on the Internet and review.

The reality is, every study that has ever taken place in the last 30 years shows very, very clearly not only the importance of quality, but the fact that the higher-quality early learning in education comes from delivery in the not-for-profit sector. That's not something that I'm making up; that's something that is borne out by study after study after study. In fact, approximately 15% higher quality has been measured in some of the studies in the not-for-profit sector. I ask you to consider, members: Do Ontario's children deserve to have 15% less quality? I certainly don't think so, and I hope that you don't think so.

What is the "quality" argument about? The quality argument is all about the fact that, like many, many labour-intensive types of services, like schools—my friend Rosario Marchese is here; he is our critic for education—like in the education sector, like in the health care sector, it's hands-on, one-on-one work with people that makes the difference. That's where the quality comes from. It comes from the staffing levels. The reality is that, not unlike public education and not unlike health care, the same rings true for child care: You have to have high-quality staff; you have to have staff who are paid well; you have to have staff who are committed to their careers in child care and in early learning. In order to achieve that commitment and those staffing levels that are consistent and long-term, you need to have funding that is not withered away into the pocket of a private operator.

Unfortunately, there are very few places where you can cut corners in places like child care centres. One of the places where corners get cut in the for-profit sector is, quite frankly, in wages. If you can't provide wages and professional development opportunities for your staff, your staff are soon going to be leaving your child care centre and moving on to another centre that is more appropriately supporting their needs. So the bottom line is that the quality argument has a heck of a lot to do with the extent to which staffing is remunerated at an appropriate level and supported appropriately. Having said that, I think people would recognize that staff turnover is something that also would disrupt the children and destabilize the centre. Of course, system-wide, that is something that we experience already and that we know happens in other jurisdictions as well.

People might wonder why this is important right now. I'm telling you that the importance of this bill coming forward right now is because we are now in a situation here in Ontario where there are significant threats to our existing system, significant threats to what is currently the majority of our providers here in Ontario, which is the not-for-profit sector. The threat comes specifically from an organization that has set up shop here in Canada, that is searching around to gobble up some of the existing centres here in Ontario. It's a multinational corporation based in Australia, and one of my colleagues later will give you some of the specific information about what's happened in Australia.

1010

They went from a system of having a far greater majority of not-for-profit centres, but they decided not to come up with any real public policy around not-for-profit expansion. Lo and behold, a couple of years later, a vast majority of providers in Australia are now in the for-profit sector. And what's happened? There is no access to child care in many parts of that country. Fees for parents have gone through the roof. There's been a significant reduction in quality. There have been situations where the for-profit conglomerates—this particular one actually operates over 2,300 centres on four different continents. They are an organization whose main priority, like any for-profit corporation, like any publicly-traded for-profit corporation—and, God bless, maybe that's the way the world works; that's fine. But not in child care, because the priority in child care should be the care of the children, the learning of the children, the development of the children.

The priority—just by definition—in the for-profit sector, particularly this model that is now threatening Ontario, is shareholder return on investment. That's what corporations do. That's their job; that's their mission. That's what they're created to do. It's the nature of their business. We don't think that early learning and care has anything to do with the making of profits and the growing of shareholder value. We think it's about the growing of children. I think it's about the growing of public value and of a society where our kids are given the tools that they need to succeed. In fact, all of the studies indicate very clearly that that's what necessary to be able to have a successful model.

We need only to look at Quebec; we see what Quebec is doing in terms of child care. We know that other provinces, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, have already gotten rid of any expansion in the for-profit sector. We need to do that as well in Ontario. Some of our Ontario cities—Toronto, Ottawa and Sudbury, recently—have already said no to expansion into the for-profit sector. They're staying in the not-for-profit sector. The preponderance of evidence is significant.

This province needs to take a proactive stand. We need to make sure that the expansion of child care in this province is only in the for-profit sector. I urge members to please allow this bill to go into committee where we can have a more fulsome debate. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Thank you for giving me the chance to speak on Bill 26, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to limit the approval of corporations to not for profit corporations. I read this bill many different times. I was listening to the member who introduced this bill a few minutes ago when she was talking about the whole intent of this bill. I have no doubt in my mind that she has good intentions and wants to protect the children in the province of Ontario.

But as a matter of fact, I wonder if the member went back to the rules, regulations and laws in this province.

She probably didn't know that we as a province, as the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, don't make deals with corporations, with child care corporations or others. So the whole thing happens through social organizations and also municipalities across the province of Ontario.

As you know, we fought very hard to sign an agreement with the federal government to create a national daycare, and the province of Ontario especially would have benefited from that agreement to a great deal. Sadly, this agreement was cancelled after the government changed in 2007. That agreement was intended to support almost 25,000 child care spots across the province of Ontario.

Despite the cancellation of this agreement, the province of Ontario and the Minister of Children and Youth Services went ahead and approved 22,000 spots across Ontario. Therefore, I don't see that if this bill would pass or not pass, it would make any difference, because we already don't interfere with any deals going on between municipalities and child care spots or organizations across the province. Our statistics show that the ratio between private and not-for-profit is almost 87 for non-profit versus about 13 for for-profit across the province. This number has been consistent for the last 10 years. So I don't see why the member opposite is making a big issue about it. In the meantime, we have tough regulations and good standards to make sure that the quality of child care in the province, and also the delivery of child care organizations in Ontario, has to be able to provide the province the [inaudible] for the children on a regular basis—update about their activities on a daily basis.

I want to tell you something very important. Almost a month ago, I had the chance to visit one of the child care spots in my riding of London-Fanshawe, called Simply Kids. It is a great small child care centre. The kids come from different backgrounds to this centre. This child care is, amazingly, very good. If anyone in this assembly gets the chance, go and visit that place. It's run by an individual. It's a small one, not a huge one. It's organic in the community—based in the community—and it works for the community.

The amazing thing about this child care is that the families of the kids have the ability to watch their kids on a regular basis from their home. Every class has a camera, and the parents can watch their kids—whether they're playing, studying, learning or interacting with the person who's looking after them—from their home. It's amazing. Also, the camera is connected only to their room. The family cannot have access to all the rooms; only to the specific room where their child is. This camera is also connected with the playground. The family can monitor their kids while they're playing outside, and can see how the people who are providing services deal with them on a regular basis. I think that's amazing.

This is a for-profit. If you are profit or non-profit, it doesn't mean: Are you going to deliver a good service?

The most important thing is that we have rules and regulations in place to protect the quality of the delivery of child care services in the province. That is the most important thing.

When we were fighting hard to maintain the agreement with the federal government, the member who stood up a few minutes ago and introduced Bill 26 didn't support us. It was a huge fight with the federal government to maintain that agreement which would provide 25,000 extra child care spots across the province. That's why I don't agree with her, in terms that passing or not passing this bill can change the whole image. The most important thing is to have rules and regulations to protect the quality of child care spots and spaces in the province and to work hard to create some kind of agreement with the federal government, with the municipalities, in order to create a good working relationship to make sure that all the spots are safe and deliver in a good fashion, in a good way, in the interests of the kids of the province.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on the issue of child care in Ontario. This is an issue of great importance to many of my constituents. We hold the responsibility, as legislators, to devise policies that suit the needs of Ontarians, meet their priorities and benefit their children.

As I regard the child care issue, I see a few clear principles that we need to follow as we make decisions. The first of these is the principle of parental choice. Moms and dads deserve to have every possible choice that suits their child care needs. They do not need or want a single, rigid system designed for everyone. Some families prefer a tax credit, with one parent staying at home or with child care being provided by a close friend or relative. Others want to make use of child care facilities, either publicly funded and run or privately funded and run. Many families do not need or want any state involvement in how they raise their children, and their views should be respected as well.

The second principle is for the government to recognize that it is up to families to raise their children. The state must respect the wishes of parents and not close off any child care options. Parents do know best, and they certainly know better than the state what is best for their children. Children learn best when they have a strong role model to follow, and that's the one at home. The bill before the House today does not meet either of these principles. It simply rules out one child care option for families. It makes no changes in the provision for standards. It makes no comment about the size of child care facilities or their quality.

1020

The member's question yesterday referred to the "risk that these new for-profit daycare corporations pose to the movement for universal accessible, affordable and regulated child care." To me, this is the wrong way to look at the issue. The role of this House is not to please a movement or a lobby group; our role is to do what is best for families and children. It was the PC government in 1998 that provided the first child care tax credit in

Ontario's history. While in office, we doubled the total funding to children's social services, spending record amounts on child care. Most importantly, we stood for a balanced child care system.

The last PC government also recognized that early childhood development was a vital investment. We launched 103 early years centres across Ontario. They offer core universal programs such as parenting classes, early literacy programs and workshops on child development. These centres let local communities decide on how best to meet their own needs. As our party knows that parents are the best ones to raise their own children, we also know that many parents want assistance with skills and expertise. The early years centres offer this assistance. A balanced approach is the best for child care.

Parents need to find out which options suit them and then have those offered to them. Let moms and dads choose what is best for their own children. We must not take any option off the table.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to start off by giving you a couple of comparisons with what is going on in Australia and what is going on right here at home in Sudbury. Over the past 17 years, the face of child care in Australia has changed dramatically. In the early 1990s, about 15% of the centre-based services were owned by small commercial operators. The rest were operated by non-profit societies. Today, about 70% are for-profit commercial operations, with approximately 25% of all centre-based child care provided by the largest child care corporation in the world. Conversely, in Canada in 2004, the last year for which these figures are available, 79% of the centre-based services were non-profit. The rest are commercial, most commonly small businesses run by independent owner-operators. Since 1990, parent fees have risen 123%—more than doubled—while household income has only increased by 62%. The most dramatic escalation occurred since the first Australia child care corporation listed publicly in 2001, with others following in 2002. In 2006, the cost of child care rose faster than almost any other monitored good or service, outstripped only by vegetables and gasoline. In fact, the child care price index has surged 65% in the past four years. Why do you think these people are getting involved? For profit.

Government spending doubled between 1991 and 1998, from \$525 million to \$1.135 billion per year, and it has almost doubled again since then. In May 2006, the federal budget set out nearly \$10 billion for child care over the next four years, and almost all of it is earmarked for child care benefits and a 30% tax rebate for out-of-pocket expenses for operators, both of which were initiated in response to the soaring costs of child care. Bloomberg reported that about 40% of the largest Australian corporation revenue comes from government subsidies. Others report the percentage to be even higher. According to the latest annual report from ABC, its worldwide profits are now \$143.1 million for 2006-07. The same corporation spent over \$700 million last year buying centres in the US, Australia, New Zealand and the

UK, and will continue to acquire and develop child care centres this year.

Now that we've had the horror story from Australia, I would like to go locally. The city of Sudbury has strong and positive relationships with five private owner-operators of licensed child care in the greater Sudbury area that have been developed over many years. However, this type of child care is a difficult fit for the child care system that the city envisions for the future. The potential conflict, where the city provides direct operating fund grants to private, for-profit operators, makes it more difficult to move toward the vision of child care as a publicly funded system of early education accessible to all families.

As with the public system of education in Ontario, where private schools may be licensed but do not receive public funding, the vision of public systems for early education would not exclude private, for-profit child care from opening their doors. However, public funding in the form of operating grants and fee subsidies would not be provided to for-profit, commercial child care centres.

This bill, in my opinion, is long overdue. I commend the member for Hamilton Centre for bringing this forward. Bigger is not better. We've witnessed that, even in cities. Let's take greater London, England. They have now gone back to the borough system of 100,000 people, including all their services, child care and other things. Bigger was not better.

Offshore control: Here we go again. Not only are we eroding our base industries; we're now eroding our education system. We're putting the control of our kids' future in the hands of overseas owners that are there for profit, not there for quality, not there for decent wages for local people who are employed in these daycare centres.

Talking about neighbourhood involvement, a lot of the people who work in these facilities are local moms, trained in our area, who have a stake in our community. They want to provide even better care than they do. But if they're under the direction of a foreign company, with their rules and their out-the-door/in-the-door policies to make more money, I'm not quite sure the quality is there.

Bad wages: Are you going to keep quality people employed, or is it going to become like another Wal-Mart? Are we going to be working for minimum wages—bad daycare, untrained and unlicensed people running these daycares? I think that may happen as it goes down the road.

So I have some great concerns. If the government doesn't support this bill, I think we're going to make a big mistake, and down the road we're going to regret not supporting this bill at this time.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I am pleased to be able to stand here today to speak to the bill. As a mother and a grandmother, and not just as an MPP, I've had to struggle with child care in a rural area over the years. When I look at this and hear someone say, "Well, we don't want to support the for-profits," for me, in my communities—and I'm sure for all rural and northern communities—the

issue is what's best for the child. It's about what is quality child care, what is affordable to the family and, more importantly, what is accessible. When we, as parents, need to have child care, we look for those things. We don't look to see whether they're for-profit or not-for-profit. It might be nice to support one or the other, but that's not necessarily the first question in our minds.

In rural communities, it's an extreme struggle to find child care on a seasonal basis. When you're a farmer and you need to get out and help with the cropping and the work on the farm, you want something safe for your children. You don't want to take them on the tractor with you; you don't want to take them into the barn with you. You want something safe for your children. You need to find something close by, and someone who is willing to work with you on a seasonal basis and in off-hours.

1030

I'm really not concerned about big box in rural and northern Ontario. We are not big enough for a big box. We are not the kinds of communities that they are looking at, but we do need the child care, and we do not always attract the not-for-profits. We have a number of people in our communities who use this as an opportunity to employ themselves. They use that as an opportunity to employ their neighbours and they also provide a service that's very important, that's very local; it's very culturally sensitive, in many cases. These are the kinds of things that we need for our children. These are the things we look for as parents.

I live in a community that is about 45 minutes outside the city of London. Many of my constituents work in the city of London, but they don't want to take their children there for child care, which is where we would find most of the larger child care facilities. We would not find very many—we do have not-for-profits, but they are not large operations. Most of them are for-profit in my communities.

As a mother who doesn't want to take her child a great distance for child care—we want to be able to have our children close to home. That way, if something happens and the child care calls and says that you need to come pick up the child because they're sick or something has happened, we often call grandparents, aunts and uncles, a neighbour, a good friend to go and pick the child up. That is because we want them close to home. If we have to do that and we have to ask someone to come from the home area into a large centre, because that's the only place that actually ends up being able—under this type of an amendment, would that be the only way we would have child care?

That is totally unfair to my constituents. I feel very strongly about this. As I look around my community and I know the struggle that we still have in rural communities to get accessible child care, I think we're tying the hands here, and we're making it more difficult to find that child care that we need in our rural communities. So I'm very opposed to this. I want to see us move forward with quality, affordability and accessibility. Those are the keys. It's not about who is operating, because I don't

think as parents most people really ask that question—unless they have a lot of options, but most rural communities don't. I find it's important that we make all avenues open and leave them open for parents.

Mr. Peter Shurman: We live in a day and age where two incomes are no longer considered a luxury but a necessity in order for many families to make ends meet.

Each and every day, parents, especially those of children not yet old enough for school, are forced to make serious decisions about appropriate care for their children so they can go to work to earn the money needed to ensure a roof over their family's heads and food on the dinner table. Some are blessed with friends or loved ones who can watch their kids during the workday, but many are not. Often a parent is forced to stay home due to a child's illness, thus missing a much-needed day's pay.

We've seen time and again how this government ignores the plight of ordinary Ontarians. They remain in the state of wilful ignorance about the state of this province's economy despite repeated warnings from respected economists. Yet as the McGuinty government keeps its collective head buried in the sand, the problems facing the parents of Ontario's children become more dire with each passing day. Rather than fostering an environment in Ontario that provides parents with a broad spectrum of choices for the care of their children, this government is steadfast in its belief that parents do not know what is best for their own children. When can we expect a modicum of individual respect and dignity?

Indeed, I believe that no one knows how to take care of a child better than a loving parent. Each of us here wants what is best for our children and our grandchildren; many of us were inspired to become MPPs so we could make Ontario a little better for them. The people we represent are no different from any of us in this chamber. No parent wants to be told by a faceless government how to raise her or his children. No two families are alike. Each family exists with its own set of circumstances. Indeed, you cannot legislate a cookie-cutter approach to such an important issue as child care.

It is our role as politicians to enable parents to make the best possible decisions for their families and to support the choices that each individual family makes. What works for a family in my riding of Thornhill may not work for a family in Thunder Bay. We must respect this fact.

What we need in this province is a range of policies that respects the diversity of families and assists them in their quest to determine the best care for their children. What we don't need are policies, such as the one proposed today, that will unreasonably limit the choices available to responsible and caring parents. Parents aren't ignorant. Give them the right to choose.

There are those in this chamber who think we should imitate the Quebec daycare model. Let me share with you some thoughts from a report of the L'Institut économique de Montréal on the subject of Quebec's model. The report cites "two-year waiting lists, lack of parental choice and a proliferation of daycare strikes as the main

shortcomings in the Quebec system since its 1997 reform under a Parti Québécois administration. 'Access to a subsidized space depends neither on the parents' financial circumstances, nor on the needs of children who may require special help.... The only factor that now plays a role is the rank of a child on a waiting list, i.e., bureaucratic convenience.'" Do we really want this for Ontario's children?

There's more in an editorial by the National Post's Norma Kozhaya. She writes: "One of the few extensive studies on the quality of Quebec child care facilities reported, in 2005, that 61% had an overall quality rated as minimal (with scores of three to 4.9 out of seven) while 12% were rated as inadequate and 27% as good. Government subsidy and regulation, clearly, does not ensure high quality."

Some parents believe an institutional setting will assist their children with early learning and socialization skills. Others believe a child can best be looked after by a venerable member of the family. Still others believe it is best for one of the parents to remain home during those formative years. The decisions made are based on each family's individual circumstances. Shift work, commute times and child care costs are all factors that impact parental decisions on child care. The best thing we can do as politicians is to broaden the range of safe child care options available to parents, not to presume that we know what's best for their children.

The federal government provided a one-time sum of almost \$300 million to Ontario for child care. Whatever happened to that? Let me point to the federal universal care benefit program. It is a new program that issues a \$100 monthly payment to families for each child under the age of six to cover the cost of child care. That way, families can decide what type of child care is best. That is choice. That is what I'm talking about: giving parents the ability to decide what is best for their child.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm very happy to be here to support my colleague from Hamilton Centre and to support her bill, which we believe is a very good bill.

As I listen to the Tories and the Liberals—more the Tories—what they have to say is very predictable. The point about choice—very predictable. They are allergic to anything public; it's embedded in their genes. It has been embedded in their genes since time immemorial, and it will never go away.

What is surprising is the Liberals. They continue to amaze me and surprise me each and every day. Two members for whom I have some respect, or a lot of respect, depending on the issue, just stood up to talk about the idea of choice—couched in different language, but it's the same thing; it's all about choice.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh, come on.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Again, it's predictable, Jimmy, what you have to say. When the Tories were in power for eight long years, they spent not one cent in child care services, public or otherwise—not one cent. So am I surprised when two Tories stand up and say, "We like choice"? I'm not surprised.

When the Liberals stand up, am I surprised? No. They have \$300 million given to them by the federal government to spend on public child care services. Did they spend one cent of federal money on public, not-for-profit child care? Not one cent. Money that was given to them by the federal government to spend for that purpose, they kept in their own pocket to do whatever else they wanted to do. They have no commitment to public, not-for-profit child care.

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We have a public elementary and secondary school system in this country. Ninety-five per cent of our children are in a public system. This, it appears, the Liberals support; that, they support. But when it comes to child care they make the case that, "Well, in some cases we don't have public in our area. What are you going to do?" And in another case another individual says, "Well, I've been to some of these for-profit and they're not so bad," and they need choice. Please. How can you argue that a public system, elementary and secondary, is good and then argue that for child care, "Well, it's not so bad; you just have to make sure that you regulate it, and if people want to make money on children, that's okay"?

How could you make that leap and feel good to be Liberals? This is the problem with Liberals. You claim you have a heart on so many issues, and when you're put to the test, you fail each and every time. And God bless you. People seem to like it, they seem to like you, so you must be doing something right. I understand it. To take two contradictory positions is always a beautiful Liberal thing, and you win each and every time. The good people of Ontario, who don't know any better, who should know better, who ought to know better—who know or ought to know that you're not investing one single cent in child care—keep voting for you, so you must be doing something right. God bless you, all Liberals, on this side and the other side.

We have a public universal health care system that is gradually being eroded by the feds, who have an allergy to public institutions, and by Liberals under the Chrétien-Martin government who eroded the funding of public services, including child care, for many, many years, since 1993 when Jean Chrétien was elected. We have a universal public health care system that is gradually, incrementally being eroded, both by Conservative governments provincially and federally and by provincial Liberal governments here. You still pretend you have a commitment to universal health care as you gradually eat away at those public institutions.

Liberals say, "We want a universal health care system. Oh, no, we want a universal public elementary and secondary system, including the post-secondary," but when it comes to children, those things that we value the most, we say, "It doesn't matter that it's a public institution or a for-profit institution making money on the care of children." That's the commitment Liberals make in this place each and every time.

Why can't they learn from Quebec, which leads on so many issues, notwithstanding any comments made by my

friend from Thornhill? It has one of the best programs offered in Canada, and it has been offered by Quebec for a long time. Why can't we follow Quebec? Their child care is provided on a low-cost basis because it's subsidized by the government. It says to working men and women, "We value the fact that you have to work, that your children are an investment for us all, and that you cannot afford to pay the rates of \$7,000 to \$15,000 for each child for that care. We want to help as a government because we believe it's an obligation of government." But not here, not the Liberals—and let's forget about the Tories.

Please. Can't you look it up, do a little reading and say, "Why can Quebec do it, and we, who have been rich for so long in this province, with so much money, declare ourselves to be incompetent and unable to do the job?" Why do you do that? All it takes is just a little effort, a little will, a little left-leaning Liberal heart, for those of you who still have some of it left, to pull into that heart and say that Quebec does a good job. Some 64% of Quebec children have access to a licensed early learning and child care program—64%. You should look at those numbers and say, "Man, how do they do it? They have been poorer than we have for a long, long time. How do they do it?" But they have, and they've been leading.

We don't have to look to Europe, as well we should, in terms of the programs they provide in Europe at an early age, not for-profit but subsidized by governments. We could and should look at Europe, but we don't have to. We could just stay here. Travel a little bit to Quebec. It's not so far. You can access it by e-mail; you don't even have to travel there, for God's sake. It's in Canada. Parents here pay anything from \$7,000 to \$15,000 a year for one child—a lot of money. Most parents can't afford it.

Most parents who cannot afford it are waiting in line, and those who don't have access to that kind of support subsidy by government are going to unlicensed, unregulated child care. We don't know what those kids are getting in those unlicensed child care services. We don't know. I can't imagine the kind of care they're getting, and the government says that it's okay. It's part of the choice that parents have. We have a profound difference with Tories and Liberals on this particular issue.

We urge people who are watching, we urge people working in the public child care system to lobby their Liberal members on an ongoing basis and make this a campaign. Some Liberals will be torn. Some Liberals will feel guilty about this. You need to meet with them face to face and ask them for their position. It's got to be part of a campaign; otherwise it won't work.

We have said in this bill that we are grandparenting the services provided by the for-profit child care groups. We are grandparenting that; we don't want any other monopolies coming from another country to provide child care for profit for our children. We simply reject that as an option.

Those who are watching in this Legislature and on television: Make it a campaign. Go after your friendly

Liberals. There are some; not too many, but there are some. Go after them and make them feel guilty so that when they go to their Tuesday caucus meetings they are forced to debate this issue in a serious way and not allow themselves to be part of the same argument about choice. We reject it.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm glad to have an opportunity to say a few words on this debate.

First of all, I find it incredibly ironic that the NDP, especially at the federal level—Jack Layton—who got together a few years ago with their Conservative friends to bring down not just the federal Liberal government but also to bring down the most comprehensive child care plan ever proposed in this country—that child care plan went down the drain the moment the NDP and Jack Layton decided they would rather pursue their own personal agenda of taking down the Liberal government at the time, and take down the child care plan with it; let it go right down the drain and have that no longer exist.

Instead, what did the Conservatives bring forward? They brought forward a small allowance that is given monthly to parents, who've told me that that is not enough to provide them with any help whatsoever. The NDP knew this was going to happen when they collaborated with the Conservatives to bring down the Liberal government. If anyone, the NDP should be complaining with their federal sisters and brothers in Ottawa as to why they brought down that child care plan.

Also, I have to address the issue of Quebec. Again, as anyone in this Chamber now knows, Ontario provides a lot of money to the federal government. We are a province that provides and subsidizes the rest of Canada. We're not complaining, saying we don't want to subsidize or help other parts that may need help; that's fine. But we subsidize Quebec a lot, and Quebec is using Ontario dollars. If they use Ontario dollars, they're going to be able to create and put forward the kind of programming and funding, whether it be in child care or other areas, that we in Ontario can't do, and this is what the Premier continues to bring up.

We're not saying that we're not going to contribute at all, but billions of dollars through equalization flow out of Ontario and go to other parts of Canada, and I'm sure some of them land in Quebec and they end up getting the programs they want. Perhaps it's time that the NDP start pointing their guns and their arguments towards the federal government and telling them that they shouldn't be hurting us so much. This is something that has come up many times.

1050

But getting to the core of the issue, the Liberals have done here in Ontario a lot towards child care. My colleagues and myself have said that we've expanded the availability of child care for the creation of more than 22,000 new licensed child care spaces in the last three years. That's a remarkable achievement, when you think about it, considering all the other areas that we've focused on in Ontario. We invested \$142.5 million in 2007 to sustain more than 7,000 new licensed child care

spaces across Ontario. So we are involved in helping with child care.

We've launched a website to help parents find the information they need to make an informed decision about licensed child care. Our government is also raising the bar on quality by establishing a regulatory college of early childhood educators, the first of its kind in Canada. Childhood educators are going to have a college to strengthen the quality of early learning. We've gone on to appoint Dr. Charles Pascal to advise in implementing full-day learning. When implemented, the full-day learning program will free up thousands of child care spaces. And there are other accomplishments which, unfortunately, time doesn't permit me to list, but the bottom line is that we have invested \$142.5 million to 2007.

In closing, I'd like to say that in the riding of Scarborough Southwest—we've allowed a lot of new immigrants, a lot of new Canadians, to come to this province. They have come to me and they've said that they have needs and they have requirements. A lot of them take public transit and have to leave their kids at child care facilities. We have responded. We are funding the ones that presently exist. We are doing our very best to make them as good as possible. Again, a lot of people in my riding have young children that require daycare, but they're not complaining about the fact that there isn't daycare available. They want to make sure that the quality is good, and that quality is improving under the Liberal government.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to rise this morning and join my colleagues in the thoughtful and antagonistic, at times, debate on the bill presented by the member from Hamilton East: Bill 26, Day Nurseries Amendment Act (Not for Profit Corporations), 2007. It certainly allows me to bring up later on some issues we have in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. For the moment, for starters, I will be joining my other two colleagues who spoke previously from the party about the PC caucus and our fundamental beliefs in Ontario children and young people, and that parents are the best suited in their families to decide on their choice—I'll use that word again—in their child care decisions and their needs.

We agree, certainly, that affordable daycare and child care is important to all the health and well-being and the development of Ontario's children. I know the member from Scarborough Southwest has just mentioned that he doesn't have any problems in his riding with access to daycare, but that's certainly not the situation in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I've spoken several times in the Legislature about the Best Start child care spaces that the former Minister of Children and Youth Services decided to remove, after promising that they would come to the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. For reasons we are still investigating, both the municipality and myself—questions about that—we hope that the new minister will look at this with fresh eyes. We've certainly asked for that, both verbally and in written letters to her.

But I think it's important to bring up the fact that the former Minister of Children and Youth Services—that ministry received a scathing report last year about the expenses and what went on in that ministry, brought forward—I mean, \$59,000 in luxury vehicles was spent; trips to the Caribbean, Argentina; other misspent monies that should have gone to hard-working Ontario families in respect to child care, and didn't. When the former minister decided to give 15,000 Best Start spaces in the province, my service provider for Kawartha-Victoria, which provides services in both Haliburton and Kawartha Lakes, received zero. We feel it was unjustified that we received zero Best Start spaces from the former minister. I've asked the Auditor General to investigate. I know the municipality of Kawartha Lakes, which would also be the service provider for Haliburton in this matter, has asked the Ombudsman to look into this, and, as I say, I've asked the minister to look into this issue with fresh eyes.

It's important to bring that up because we have challenges not only geographically but with a lot of low-income families in our riding, and the service providers, the municipalities, want to provide the best services possible. They're certainly at a disadvantage when they weren't allocated the initial Best Start spaces, a disadvantage that would be \$5 million over four years.

I know the member for Peterborough is looking at me kind of strangely, but certainly it's been brought to his attention many times.

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The best program in North America.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It is the best child program. Certainly there was federal money, as has been mentioned, that was given to the province. The accountability for where that money was spent—and the good work done by the previous Conservative government, no question, on early childhood education. This brings us to a bigger picture, and I know the member for Leeds-Grenville and the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook spoke yesterday in the budget debate about how the commitment to Ontario actually means taking responsibility for governing seriously. You keep pointing fingers at different governments, be they federal or municipal; everybody is at fault but yourselves. Again, I've said several times that the federal government gave you a lot of money. We're asking how you disbursed it in respect to the child care spaces.

I've brought my example forward several times in this Legislature, and I bring it forward again today because we don't want to let that go. That's still a lot of money to us in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, and we're at a disadvantage in providing services that we desperately need in that riding. All the other service providers in the rest of the province received funding. It's doesn't make sense, but we're still asking questions and I hope to get some responses and some answers from this government.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't hold your breath.

Ms. Laurie Scott: No, I won't hold my breath, because that is a long, long time and we've been fighting this for a long, long time.

Bill 26 has brought the opportunity to discuss the lack of this government's initiative in respect to child care spaces, and I welcome the debate this morning. We have some fundamental disagreements on the best way for child care to be delivered with private-public providers, but we welcome the initiative brought forward by the member for Hamilton Centre.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Horwath, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to say, I'm pretty shocked by the lack of information that some of the members in this House have and on which they are basing their decisions.

I want to start by addressing the claim that the member for Scarborough Southwest makes about government investment. This government has invested very little of Ontario dollars in child care in this province, and that's a fact. They promised quite some time ago over \$300 million of investment that would be brought into this child care sector, and it has not shown up. That's the reality. Any dollars that are being invested at all are coming from federal agreements, and those are running out soon. So I've got to hope the government is going to start taking some real action in Ontario in committing to child care.

1100

I also have to say that I don't think people were listening when I indicated in my initial remarks that we are not saying, and this bill does not say, "Let's get rid of the existing for-profit providers." In fact, I have long acknowledged, and so have many others in this sector, that it's because of lack of government investment, because of ignoring the needs of families and children in the province, that some of these for-profit providers have come to pass. The reality is that if we were investing what we should be investing in child care, then there would be no need, because the fulsome and bountiful public provision of child care would exist like it does in the province of Quebec.

But mark my words: Things are different in Ontario today than they were even two years ago. The reality is that the big bad wolf of the multinational corporation is breathing down the neck of the small providers here in Ontario, and the reality is that we do not want to see big-box child care. So it's not good enough for the government to close its eyes and pretend that everything is just the same. It's not the same. We're not talking about small, mom-and-pop operators like one of the members was talking about earlier. Absolutely not. We are talking about big corporations, corporate child care. That is not acceptable in the province of Ontario. It's not acceptable to me or to most parents. We have to pass this bill and get on with good child care in Ontario.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO
AMENDMENT ACT, 2008
LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT
LA LOI FAVORISANT
UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

Mrs. Savoline moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, Mrs. Savoline, you have up to 10 minutes. The floor is yours.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I rise and recognize in the House a constituent in Burlington who has brought this issue to my attention, that we have a loophole in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Mr. Ted Kindos is the owner and operator of Gator Ted's Tap and Grill, and others have joined him from Burlington.

I am proposing to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to include that "no person shall smoke tobacco or any controlled substance or hold lighted tobacco or any burning controlled substance in any enclosed public place or enclosed workplace," and also add, "or within 10 feet of that place."

The issue came to my attention some months ago when Mr. Kindos told me that he was being challenged by a patron who was smoking marijuana for medicinal purposes. My amendment does not cast judgment on those who smoke marijuana for relief of whatever ailment causes them to smoke it, and I want to make that perfectly clear. I am not trying to infringe on anybody's rights to take their own medication. However, what happens here is that the rights of the broader public then are infringed on if marijuana is allowed to be smoked in places where we have prohibited smoking tobacco.

When researching this issue, I really felt that there was a loophole in our legislation, one that folks could take opportunity with. I felt it was important to bring this forward and to close that loophole. I want to ensure that this follows on the intent of the original act, which was to create a safer environment. It really was to be a safety measure for the broader public against tobacco smoke, which we know is detrimental to people's health. What the original act did was, it banned smoking in enclosed public places and all enclosed workplaces; this happened a couple of years ago. Time has gone by and we're learning where, perhaps, the wrinkles are in the act. This gives us a way to close those gaps. The places included restaurants, bars, schools, private clubs, sports arenas, work vehicles, offices and entertainment venues, including casinos, bingo halls, and bowling and billiard establishments. What this act proposes to do is to include the prohibition of smoking controlled substances in all those places as well. If it stands as a safety measure for people's health in the original act, then it should be extended in this amendment to smoking controlled substances in public places as well.

It's really regrettable that we even have to legislate what I call a logical or a common-sense issue. Talking about this today, it may seem like, well, why wouldn't it include that? Well, it doesn't, and only legislation can change that. So I would like to say that what I'm bringing forward is about the principle. It's the principle of respecting the rights of folks who do not want to be subjected to second-hand smoke of any kind. What message do we send our Ontario residents or our children if we allow a loophole to stand?

What I think we're doing by moving forward with this amendment is to protect workers and the public from exposure to second-hand smoke. It will help ensure, I think, that the young people understand that we are not tolerant of this in our society in Ontario and perhaps pick up this deadly addiction.

Tobacco, as many of you know, is the number one cause of preventable disease and death in Ontario. It kills 16,000 people every year. Tobacco-related diseases cause the Ontario economy almost \$2 billion yearly in health care. This results in \$2.6 billion in productivity losses and about 500,000 hospital days each year. We know that we need some relief in our health establishments, our hospitals. I think this goes yet one more step in protecting our public and keeping it as safe as we can.

It also, I believe, advocates for the right of business owners to protect and advocate, first of all, on behalf of their patrons, the majority of their patrons, and also on behalf of their business. What happens when patrons stop coming to a business is that the business loses money and eventually goes out of business. I think this act would go a long way to preventing that kind of thing from happening. The restaurant industry, as we all know, is a very competitive place, and even though there's a certain loyalty attached to attending one particular establishment, I think that in order to protect one's health, one's children's health, people will stop attending that establishment in order not to breathe that second-hand smoke. So we owe it to businesses that cater to patrons—the food service industry—to protect them against anybody who feels that this is an opportunity to actually go around the law. There are establishments, I think, that are at risk because this is happening, because police will not confront anybody who has a certificate to smoke marijuana for legal purposes. So when you can't count on the police to help you because of a certificate, then I think we have to legislate this into our Ontario laws. People have rights, and I respect those rights, but I think it goes without saying that with rights come responsibilities. Unfortunately, some people have to be legislated into those responsibilities.

Our businesses create jobs in our community. They provide good-quality jobs, they contribute to the economy in that way, but they also give back to the community. They give back in many ways. They give back through volunteerism. They have the right of this protection in Bill 42 to help them continue to be good corporate citizens, to be good constituents in our ridings and to provide an environment where they can run their businesses

without the risk of being challenged and without the risk of losing patrons because somebody is smoking, either trying to smoke in the establishment or right at the doorway of the establishment. I think this bill actually closes that loophole and provides us with the opportunity to make things right and continue with the intent that the bill set out to do back in May 2006, when we all agreed that smoking was bad for our health, that we were providing safety to residents in Ontario by creating the legislation in the first place and that this just follows on that legislation.

1110

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to commend the member for bringing forth this bill. We support this bill. However, here are a few concerns about enforcement and a rationale for this amendment.

Enforcement: Local public health units are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. In 2006, when the restriction on smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces was introduced, the government provided funding for enforcement, a commitment of \$5.5 million. The new provision brought forth by the member in restricting smoking within 10 feet of a public place or workplace will require a greater level of enforcement resources and will create an additional resource burden on the local public health units. Although we are supportive of the bill, once again, we want to make sure it is enforceable in a way that does not stress the local public health units.

Effects of second-hand smoking: We all know the health impacts of second-hand smoke on our communities. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, cigarettes produce about 12 minutes of smoke, yet the smoker may inhale only 30 seconds of smoke from that cigarette. The rest of the smoke lingers in the air for non-smokers and smokers to breathe. Second-hand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals. Many of these chemicals are known to cause cancer. Chemicals found in second-hand smoke include carbon monoxide, found in your car's exhaust; ammonia, found in window cleaners; cadmium, found in batteries; and arsenic, found in rat poison. Each year, more than 1,000 non-smoking Canadians die from second-hand smoke. This bill takes additional steps to ensure that fewer people are subjected to the dangers of second-hand smoke.

Second-hand smoke versus other pollutants: While this bill will lower the impacts of second-hand smoke on Ontarians and is important, we need to keep in mind that in many communities across Ontario the health impacts of second-hand smoke are far, far outweighed by widespread industrial pollution. I'll give you an example. If one of my fellow colleagues in the steel industry is standing beside his gate 10 feet away from where this new law would take provision, then you look directly behind him and you see large stacks putting out tonnes and tonnes of pollutants into the local air. The Ontario Medical Association estimates that in 2005, air pollution

caused 5,800 premature deaths, almost 17,000 hospital admissions and almost 60,000 Ontarians to visit hospitals and emergency rooms. The OMA report estimates that the cost of air pollution to the economy of Ontario is a staggering \$16 billion per year. These health impacts are rising at an extraordinary rate. So while we support this bill, it is important to highlight these concerns. If you're standing outside of your workplace in Hamilton, even in a smoke-free environment and at a 10-foot perimeter, you are not breathing clean air. The air around you is probably 15 times worse than the cigarette alone.

What are we going to do about cleanup? Okay, the guy was dropping butts in the doorway of the establishment—not good; not good for children and not good for anybody to breathe that in. But now he's going to stick that butt 12 feet, 14 feet away on the ground—more cleanup. Has anything been taken into consideration about cleaning up the butts, cleaning up the cigarettes surrounding the establishment, not just 10 feet in front of the door, where they used to stick ashtrays so people could smoke outside, even if they were employees? What are you doing around the establishment? What are you doing about the streets, where these people are now going to throw these cigarettes? Can they not breathe, 11 feet away from the establishment, the same cigarette butt or whatever is thrown on the ground or whatever they are smoking? Cannot there be residue from the marijuana, or who knows what else—opium? Who knows what people are taking? Is this going far enough? Is this really going to eliminate it?

I can't emphasize enough that I'm not sure if the member has taken into consideration the enforcement of this. As far as I can see, having been in Hamilton for many years, I haven't seen too many people get fined with smoking violations. The odd one was blatant: inside a bar or a restaurant. They were actually doing it and trying to push the issue. They got fined. So I'm not really sure how this is going to be enforced.

I hope the member, in discussions, if this bill goes further in committee, will take into consideration some of these other concerns and try to alleviate some of the tension of people who feel they're being unjustly dealt with because of the big stacks that are pouring out tonnes and tonnes of pollution, which I tried to address with the environmental minister the other day.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today, and certainly a pleasure to announce that I'll be supporting this bill. I think it is a wonderful bill; I think it's well thought out. It's nice to be able to work with the member from Burlington. She and I have a long history working together on Halton regional council. Sometimes the adversarial nature of this place puts you at odds with each other, so it's certainly nice to be working in a cooperative way again on this.

I think there's a certain logic to this bill that's appealing, that I think would make most members of this House support the bill. The test I often use as to whether something makes sense or not is to talk to kids about it. When you look at any major behavioural change that

we've been able to make in our society over the past 10, 15, 20 years—when you think about things like recycling, when you think about drinking and driving, when you think about a host of changes, like smoking, perhaps—when we told adults it was unsafe to smoke, adults continued to smoke. It was when we got kids to talk to their parents and say, "I'd like you to stop smoking," that parents started to pay some attention. When we asked adults to start to recycle tin cans and pop cans, it wasn't the adults who really did the work, who did any of the heavy lifting on that; it was the kids who did it. It was the kids who would not allow you to throw a pop can in your own garbage. Drinking and driving: We told people they shouldn't drink and drive, and adults continued to drink and drive. We told the kids, "Don't ever get in a car with someone who's been drinking. If your parents have been drinking, hide the car keys." That's when we started to see action on drinking and driving. So if you asked a child, if you asked a young person today, if you asked some of the pages in the House today, "Does this make sense? Should you have to walk through a cloud of marijuana smoke to get into a restaurant?" I think the answer from everybody would be no; somebody simply doesn't have the right to do that to other people.

The dangers of second-hand smoke are very, very clear. I think the same logic applies here in this bill, that the dangers of marijuana second-hand smoke are no less dangerous. In fact, some of the research I've seen has said that marijuana second-hand smoke could perhaps be even more dangerous.

I think of all the progress we've been able to make on the issue of second-hand smoke and smoking cessation—and we have made terrific progress, as a government. We committed to reduce smoking in Ontario by 20% by the end of 2007. It was in 2003 that we set that target. But we were able to decrease smoking by over 30% between 2003 and 2006.

We have a new proposed law coming out that would ban smoking in cars with children. That makes sense to everybody around this House, I would hope. We know that smoking kills 13,000 Ontarians each and every year. It costs our health care system \$1.7 billion every year.

So unlike attempts by previous parties to do something about smoking among young people and adults, the past four or five years have seen actual progress on this issue. It's something that we do want to keep moving forward with. We've seen, when the NDP were in power, that smoking went up among young people. Between 1991 and 1995, smoking rose from 21% to 31%. How could that go up?

Mr. Paul Miller: That's our fault?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is. I don't know how you did that, but you managed to do that.

Our plan is working. In a 2007 survey by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 72% of students between grade 7 and grade 12 are reporting that they have never smoked a cigarette in their life. That's a 15% increase since 2003. So we're starting to see some real progress. To have a loophole inserted, or to have some-

one try to take advantage of a loophole, seems to me to just run contrary to the progress that's been made to date. So as I said, I'll be supporting the bill.

There certainly is a federal element to this as well, and I would urge the member for Burlington, if she hasn't already done so, to contact the federal member from Burlington too. Certainly this is a controlled substance; certainly there's a role for the federal government in this issue. I would hope today, when the vote is taken, that all members in this house would support the member from Burlington. But I don't think we need to let the federal government off the hook on this. They have a role to play here; I don't know if all members agree with that. Certainly, I think that if you look—

Mr. Jeff Leal: I do.

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Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The member from Peterborough agrees, and that's good enough for me.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He agrees with everything. Wait till I get up. He'll agree with me.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I can't wait to hear that one.

I know the establishment in question; I know the proprietor of the establishment in question; I played soccer against him for a number of years. He's very, very involved in the community, he's a person who takes his corporate and social responsibility very seriously, and he's somebody who deserves to be supported. As I said, I will be supporting it, and I would urge all members to support it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the debate on this bill brought forward by my colleague from Burlington, Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I must say that Ms. Savoline did offer me a treat for speaking today, but that is pure chocolate. I assure you, there is nothing in there but pure milk chocolate. I do appreciate any bribes in the way of candy that you can offer, Ms. Savoline.

Speaker, you have to ask yourself: Why do we need to bring in a bill that should, for most thinking people, be automatic? Over the years, incrementally, we have changed the rules with regard to smoking in this province. I can't say exactly when it was, but maybe in the late 1980s, we first banned smoking in businesses and public places such as clothing stores, or in my case, a hardware store, so that you couldn't be smoking in those buildings. It may have been later than that. Incrementally, we've gone to a situation where a couple of years ago, we banned smoking completely in bars, restaurants, and everything else except for when they built a nice, fancy room down at the casino—the government did, so that they could smoke there.

We've had these incremental changes to the law so that we could send the message that we as a society and we as people in government believe that smoking is inherently bad for you, and we can't simply allow it to take place wherever somebody chooses to conduct themselves in that activity.

Then, of course, we had medical exemptions to smoke marijuana, a controlled substance. Those were granted by the federal government through Health Canada if someone could put forward a case that their health was being benefited by the ability to smoke marijuana.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Grandma's glaucoma.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Grandma's glaucoma.

But that's not what this debate is about. This debate is about whether or not someone who has that exemption has the right to smoke somewhere else.

What I fundamentally believe is that while you may have the exemption from a law, it doesn't put you above the law. In the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, we don't permit smoking in bars, restaurants or establishments such as that. So just because someone has the privilege of having a medical exemption to smoke a controlled substance such as marijuana, that, in my mind—and, I believe, in the mind of every reasonable person in this province, with the exception of that person who is bringing this before the court—certainly, Mr. Kindos, the people who work in his establishment and the customers in his establishment would believe that it should go without saying that that does not give someone the right to smoke marijuana in a place where the rest of the population cannot partake in the smoking of tobacco.

We live in a society—or at least we used to—where the law applies to everyone. In this government, quite frankly, they have different views about how the law is applied. I want to talk about the situation we have in Caledonia, for example, and the situation with the Haudenosaunee Development Institute and how this government views acts of extortion with regard to the law.

I know that if I went over to Welland, into my friend Mr. Kormos's riding, and started going door to door demanding money, I would soon find myself on the wrong end of the law, but in this government they permit that because they don't want to enforce the law.

Let's talk about illegal tobacco. Michael Perley of the Ontario Campaign for Action on Tobacco now believes that fully one third of the cigarettes consumed in this province are illegal, contraband cigarettes. The revenue for the government from the sale of tobacco is plummeting. They like to say that as a result of their strong position against smoking they've actually reduced smoking, but no, they haven't. What they've reduced is the enforcement of the law, because they don't want to have anything to do with illegal cigarette smuggling coming through First Nation reserves in this province. They don't want to touch it—not with a 10-foot pole.

My question is, will they actually agree to enforce the law should Ms. Savoline's bill be passed? This is an opportunity—another one; they've squandered opportunities—to say, "We're going to ensure that this law applies to everyone in this province of Ontario. If you can't smoke cigarettes there, you're not going to be smoking a controlled substance."

I support this law in the strongest way possible. I congratulate Ms. Savoline for bringing it forward, and I'm looking for the vote a little later on today.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to take a few minutes on this bill because I know my colleague the member from Hamilton Centre wants to speak to it.

Just from a personal perspective, I want to talk a little bit about the importance of this type of legislation toward curbing people's habits when it comes to smoking. I used to be a pack-and-a-half-a-day smoker, probably some 80 pounds ago, but I've lost about half of that, so that's pretty good. Basically, like most people who smoked at that time, I was very hostile towards any type of legislation that would restrict my ability to smoke.

I remember back in the 1980s when legislation was first introduced limiting our ability to smoke on airplanes and a few other places. Like most smokers I was up in orbit about it—"Who are they to tell me I can't smoke in this particular place?"—not realizing a couple of really important things. Never mind that it's bad for your health, but I never realized as a smoker to what extent it really annoys people who don't smoke. Now, being a non-smoker for some 15 or 18 years, since I quit, it just amazes me that I never recognized as a smoker of the day that if somebody walks into a room and smokes, just how obnoxious that smell can be and to the degree that it's bothersome, to the point that you don't want to be in the same room. You want to get out of the restaurant and stuff.

As a former smoker, I understand the arguments of those people who smoke, because certainly I hear that from my constituents as I travel around the riding every time this type of legislation comes forward. But I'd just remind people that legislation like this in the end helps to take away the triggers that allow you to smoke. Why did I quit eventually? Because it became so unhandy, so difficult to find places to smoke. I finally came to the conclusion, "It's more of a pain to try to find a place to smoke, so I'm just going to quit." It was like, "You can't smoke on the airplane." God, I used to have two or three on that one, because I was a bit of a white-knuckle flier at the time. I used to not be able to smoke in my office here at Queen's Park. I used to be up in the ministry office at the time, so I'd have to go outside in the snow, the rain and the rest of it. You couldn't smoke in public buildings that were owned by the government. I just came to the conclusion, "Heck, I don't need this hassle anymore. Maybe I should try quitting," and eventually it is what led me to quit smoking.

I know that a lot of smokers out there get annoyed when this type of legislation comes forward, but from my perspective, I just want to say that if you can get this old dog to learn a new trick and quit smoking some 17, 18 years ago—

Mr. John Yakabuski: How old are you?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, a young dog at the time—I would just say that anything is possible.

I encourage members to vote for this law. I think, however, that the bill will have to go to committee if it

does pass here at second reading, because I think we need to give people an opportunity to come forward and point out whatever difficulties they have with the bill. I look at parts of this bill that quite rightfully are probably more under the Criminal Code than they are under provincial jurisdiction, but nonetheless we will support this bill.

1130

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Indeed it is a pleasure to join the debate this morning on Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. I would certainly like to commend the honourable member from Burlington for her initiative in this regard. Clearly, she has an issue in her community and she is working hard on behalf of her constituents to bring that issue forward.

In fact, many of the issues brought forward this morning are issues with which I could certainly concur. For me as a former physician, the whole initiative behind what led to the Smoke-Free Ontario Act in 2006 started when I was in medical school. I'm going way back to the 1960s—because it was the US Surgeon General in 1963, Dr. Everett Koop, who actually brought forward the epidemiological evidence that showed that many forms of lung cancer were directly related to tobacco smoke.

As many members have stated, it has been a very long war against tobacco. Those of us who worked in the municipal sector remember those first few municipal bylaws. I know the honourable member for Burlington, in her capacity as regional chair of Halton, will have had to deal with that, as we did in York region. In my community—I have four municipalities in my riding—the type of public debate and, as the member for Timmins-James Bay said, the difficulty of getting those bylaws through one by one, as we did in York region, and eventually—through a lengthy process requiring a triple majority—to in fact have a regional bylaw for the whole of York region that we passed in the year 2000.

Since that time, we needed to level the playing field across the province. So when this government was elected in 2003, one of our commitments at that time in the platform leading up to that election was to bring forward a Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which we see before us. Of course, our government very recently proposed an amendment. Members have alluded to the danger for children in cars where adults are smoking. I'm certainly hoping, given the kind of debate we've heard today, that there will be all-party consent to that particular amendment. In fact, hearing all the concern related to tobacco smoke, hopefully the opposition parties will also be supporting our budget, because of course in our budget we are proposing to establish a permanent retail sales tax exemption on nicotine replacement therapy.

Having said that, as we know, certainly there are issues with the proposal around enforcement. I thank my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek for remembering public health units and their role in enforcing the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, which I believe they are doing exceptionally well. It certainly could be a challenge, and some of these issues need to be fleshed out.

My colleague also talks in general about pollutants. Certainly we know, as the science is telling us more and more, the harm that so many substances, potentially chemical toxins, can do to our health. We in this Legislature, of course, are all committed to ensuring that we do guard public safety, as the honourable member from Burlington has suggested.

I see clearly the need for further discussion and debate on this very important issue. I would like to thank the member from Burlington for bringing this issue forward.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to join in the debate this morning and support my colleague the member from Burlington on her private member's Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Certainly, the member from Burlington has been an outstanding addition to our caucus and has represented her constituents extremely well. Today's private member's bill is an example of that. She had a constituent, Ted Kindos, the owner of Gator Ted's, who brought a problem he was having to his member of provincial Parliament; in this case, Joyce Savoline, the member for Burlington. There was a problem in legislation that was affecting his business. I see there are many members in the gallery from the Burlington area in support of this, and we are pleased to have you here with us today. Certainly it is our responsibility, as legislators, to fix problems that exist that are affecting our constituents, and in this instance, all the people of Ontario.

The government's website says, on Bill 42, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, "The Smoke-Free Ontario Act is designed to protect the health of all Ontarians by prohibiting smoking in all enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places in Ontario...." This should be consistent across the board, and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke made the point that there should be one law, whether it affects a controlled substance or second-hand smoke from cigarettes.

Under the previous Minister of Health Promotion, we had on the website "equal protection under the law to all Ontarians for second-hand smoke and prevent youth from starting." The amendment brought forward today by my colleague from Burlington speaks to this quote, allowing no exceptions for any controlled substance.

I was also the critic for health promotion, and I'm certainly a strong advocate of healthy lifestyles, including reducing cancer-causing exposure to second-hand smoke. I know that the Canadian Cancer Society did a survey a few years ago, and my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock had the highest lung cancer deaths related to smoking in Ontario, which certainly highlights the need for education and prevention. It also speaks to access to primary health care, specifically in my riding, with the underserved designation we have and the lack of doctors and health care professionals.

In my other life, before I entered the Legislature, I was a nurse, and I understand the medical value of controlled substances like marijuana. As long as it's used in public places and does not affect Ontarians in other ways, there

is certainly a proper place to use medicinal marijuana, and that should be followed.

It's our responsibility to protect Ontarians, and the member from Burlington has done an excellent job of bringing this forward. She has gotten support from all parties in the Legislature so far. At the end of this session—closer to 12 p.m., for people in the gallery and at home—we'll be having a vote. Hopefully we can move this legislation forward and get that loophole closed.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today, and I thank the member from Burlington for bringing forward this legislation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words in support of the member for Burlington's bill. I have to say that I look at it from some of my own experience at the municipality. When I was a municipal councillor in Hamilton, my area of representation included our downtown, and I can tell you that there was no end of frustration, usually from many of the owners of large office towers, who were concerned that as people were not be able to smoke in their workplaces anymore, it forced people out of the office towers and onto the street. Particularly in inclement weather, but really at all times, people would converge and congregate around the entranceways of these buildings. That caused some concern and some problems for the people who owned those buildings and were leasing out the space to various types of businesses within.

The issue became a couple of different things. One was that of people coming out at various times of the day—morning break, lunch break, afternoon break, whenever, or even just a sneaking-out break, when they weren't supposed to be doing that—and dropping their cigarette butts on the ground and jamming them out with their heel or their foot. By the end of the day, you would have quite an unsightly mess of cigarette butts on the very doorsteps of these buildings. It became pretty unsightly, and it was something that was difficult to try to resolve.

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I recall that we did successfully implement—and, just downtown the other day, noticed yet again—a beefing-up of public ashtrays in our downtown area. That helped, but it didn't really solve the problem 100%. It certainly helped those people who were inclined to actually put their cigarette butt in the right place, but the bottom line is, the problem still remained.

So I think that this bill will help to move people away from that very small space, congregating in front of, often, the only entranceway to some of these large office towers. The other thing is, if you were actually going to go into this office tower or that office tower and it happened to be a time when there were a number of people congregating smoking, people would have to run the gauntlet to try to get through the group of people who were smoking in order to access the building. Again, this became problematic.

So whether it's the litter issue or whether it's the issue of having to run a gauntlet to get through groups of smokers at a front entranceway, I think this bill will help address that concern that I know a number of owners of businesses in the community that I come from have articulated over the years.

I also have to say that it certainly has been my experience that when these congregations of smokers are taking place in front of these buildings and you happen to be inside and the door opens, what happens but a big waft of smoky air gets sucked right into the building and you're hit; you have some kind of cloud of noxious smoke hitting you. It goes back to the issue of second-hand smoke. It goes back to the issue of the extent to which we have to try to do whatever we can to reduce the exposure of people to second-hand smoke. I think this member's bill does very much that.

I know there are other parts of the bill as well that speak to the kinds of substances that are currently not caught, if you will, in the legislation, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. Again, I think as the member mentioned in her opening remarks, it seems kind of—I'm not sure of the term she used, but it doesn't really make sense. It seems like almost an administrative error that somehow—so tobacco is legal. We're now saying that we cannot smoke tobacco in public places or places of employment or various places listed in the act, but lo and behold, illegal substances were not covered off. I know my colleague from Timmins—James Bay raised the issue very briefly as to whether or not that is something that is a matter for this kind of legislation—for the Smoke-Free Ontario Act amendment—or whether that issue should be dealt with in other areas like the Criminal Code or some other place.

The reality is that it seems to me that the smoking of, particularly, medicinal marijuana, where people are actually able to smoke that substance because they have a doctor's prescription—it really shouldn't be something that is done. Because, in the same way as regular tobacco, the wacky tabacky—is that what you call it?—also has the kinds of toxins in it that are harmful to the health of other people.

The reality is that this bill is one that makes sense. It's one that not only will help in terms of some of the outstanding issues that I know exist in commercial areas, in our downtowns across the province, but also I think it covers off a piece—a kind of no-brainer in terms of the restriction of smoking of any kind of substance in a location that is currently identified in the Smoke-Free Ontario Act.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to make remarks and I want to congratulate the member on bringing this forward. I think it's a positive piece of legislation and something that can be very well supported. It really does speak to the health of Ontarians—something that we all think is important.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am pleased to join the debate on Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, brought by the member from Burlington. I think I'm

going to support this bill because it speaks about something important to us as a government. We have fought very hard to work on this issue for many different years. I know when we got elected in 2003, we brought this issue forward and we debated it big-time in this place. I remember that the investment to control smoking habits and invest in this area was almost \$10 million when I got elected in 2003. Right now, we have almost \$60 million invested in this issue because it means a lot to us and we want to help the people who smoke in the province of Ontario. For that reason, we created a special ministry called the Ministry of Health Promotion in order to promote healthy habits and healthy living.

I listened to many different speakers who spoke before me—what great experts in this field, especially one of them, who was a nurse in her past life. She knows a lot about the impact of smoking on people and the cause of smoking. We also had with us our colleague, my friend, the member from Oak Ridges—Markham. She's a doctor and she was also the medical officer for York region. She knows a lot about the impact of smoking, and of second-hand smoke too, like when you inhale smoke, the damage may be more and greater than when you smoke directly. I acknowledge that myself, Mr. Speaker. I hate it when I go to visit a friend and they smoke; it's awful and it bothers me. I ask them nicely if they can quit smoking until I leave, or I leave.

Mr. Peter Kormos: In your house?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: In their homes, not my house. In their homes.

For some reason, when we introduced this law in the province of Ontario in 2006, it was very difficult for many people, especially the people who smoked and who used to go to the coffee shop. They got used to it. They went to drink coffee and smoke, or they went to the bar to drink beer or whatever, and then they smoked. It was a part of the habit created through the history of humankind. Also, it was promoted through the media. When you watched a movie, you saw a good-looking woman smoking and you saw like a Marlboro man, a big, huge, macho man, on every billboard across the globe, actually smoking and riding his horse. It was some kind of promotional material across the globe that created a kind of stimulation to sway people to smoke. And I guess it was working. It was part of the fashion of humankind across the globe.

Then, when this issue became very dangerous for humankind, people started thinking about it, because the cost, at least in Ontario—almost 13,000 people die from smoking and it costs our public health care almost \$2 billion; it's very costly. That's why all the activists, all the government colleagues, members of provincial Parliament, and the many different activists in our communities came together and enforced the law and it became a law in Ontario. You cannot smoke in public places and you cannot smoke in the car—hopefully, it's going to be a law soon—while you have children in your car.

I think it is a very good initiative to be taking, and I thank the member from Burlington for bringing this very

important issue. It's dear to our hearts and to many people in the province of Ontario, especially the people who work in health care, because it's important to us to make sure we live in good conditions and healthy conditions.

I was also listening to the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek when he was talking about a very important issue, about the unit to implement the law and enforce it, the health unit in every city, basically. We have to make sure that the budget is there in order to enforce the law, because most of the time it's very difficult to implement issues like this one here, when you know people smoke, especially when they are driving alone, or they are smoking when people are not monitoring them.

It was also brought to this House and to the attention of the people of Ontario that smoking is not just hazardous to the people who smoke; it also pollutes the environment. The environment is very important too. It's our responsibility as citizens and as a government to bring laws and rules to protect not just our health, but also the environment around us, because indirectly, the environment will affect us. I listened to the member from Hamilton Centre, as a previous politician at the municipal level. She was talking about putting ashtrays in many different spots in the city instead of throwing cigarette butts out on the street, because we don't want to pollute our streets. We have a good environment, good streets, good gardens. It's very disgusting when you see people smoking and throwing them on the ground and twisting them under their feet. It just doesn't look good and it also pollutes—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Chewing gum is no better.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I agree with you. In some countries, they ban chewing gum because it sticks everywhere and anywhere, especially when they go to meetings. It's bad.

Anyway, I'm glad to join this debate, and I support—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Further debate?

1150

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm absolutely thrilled to support the motion that has been put forward—Bill 42, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act—by the member from Burlington.

The member from Burlington, as you know, was elected in a by-election. I can tell you that ever since she was elected to our Legislature, we have been the beneficiaries of her working extremely hard on behalf of her constituents in the Burlington community. I think this particular piece of legislation again demonstrates the fact that she is very responsive to the concerns of her constituents. In this case it's Mr. Kindos, the owner and the operator of Gator Ted's Tap and Grill. I'd like to join others to welcome Ted here and those others who have come from Burlington.

I think we all agree that this is just plain common sense. I think people wonder why it wasn't done before this. I applaud the member for stepping forward and

introducing Bill 42 today, which simply means that the prohibition is going to be extended against smoking these substances anywhere within an enclosed public space or workplace or other places such as schools. I think we all know that this is something that obviously is going to be supported today.

It really is all about respecting the rights of people. I think we are quite aware of the harmful effects of smoke, and that was why the original legislation had been introduced. Recently we've talked about introducing legislation which I've been very supportive of. I did introduce a resolution to make sure that we don't force children under the age of 16 who are in cars to be subject to tobacco smoke. I very much support our moving forward, because we know that tobacco smoke has a very detrimental impact on children. When I was Minister of Health, I was pleased to introduce measures at that time which recognized the health issues that were associated with smoking.

I think the amendment today to the original act simply builds upon, obviously, our concern for the health and the safety of people in the province of Ontario. Again, I want to applaud the member. As I say, she has been an outstanding MPP since she arrived here. She did a phenomenal job as the regional chair before that time. I can tell you: Time and time again she brings the concerns of her constituents to either our caucus table or to this Legislature, and I applaud her for this move today.

Mr. Jim Wilson: As a former Minister of Health, I too want to join with my colleagues from all sides of the House in congratulating the member from Burlington, Joyce Savoline, for bringing forward this measure. As my colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said, though, it's astounding that we would have to bring forward legislation and that common sense seems to have gone out the door, at least with some people in Ontario, that they would actually smoke a joint right in the doorway of a public restaurant, Gator Ted's.

I've been to Gator Ted's. I don't remember it very well, but I know I was there at one time with the former member from Burlington. The only reason I don't remember it is—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Reefer madness.

Mr. Jim Wilson: There was a lot of smoke going through the door; I remember that.

Anyway, as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo has just said so eloquently, we're very proud of Ms. Savoline, our colleague, who was regional chair for many years. A lot of people probably don't know, but Joyce not only practises good health, but she has done so all her life. She used to train with the National Ballet of Canada. I congratulate her today with bringing this initiative forward.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to add some words of support to the debate that has been taking place this morning on Bill 42 and to congratulate and commend my colleague the member for Burlington for bringing this bill forward, An Act to amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act. As members know, this bill is intended to prohibit

smoking any controlled substance within 10 feet of a public place. I certainly agree that this is a measure that's needed. We shouldn't really have to debate this too long. I would hope that the government will allow it to pass into law.

I want to congratulate and commend the member for Burlington for the good work she does on behalf of all her constituents. It's an honour to work with her, along with the member for Halton and the member for Oakville, representing the region of Halton. I'm pleased to have that opportunity. I really look forward to the government getting its support behind this bill so as to ensure that it passes into law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Savoline, you have two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to thank my colleagues and friends from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Oakville, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Timmins–James Bay, Oak Ridges–Markham, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Hamilton Centre, London–Fanshawe, Kitchener–Waterloo and Wellington–Halton Hills.

I'm overwhelmed by the comments that are being made today in support of this bill. I have noted the comments that have been made, and I will take them under advisement as this, hopefully today, moves on to committee.

I think some of our residents feel there is a futility when they come to government and ask for something to be fixed. It's refreshing today that an establishment that caters to a sports crowd is here asking us to strengthen and enforce a no-smoking act. I think that speaks a lot to how far we've gone in the awareness of how bad smoking is for our health.

We have an opportunity here to legislate something that all of us have said is just logic and common sense, but that's the responsibility we take on as legislators in this House. I think we have to do this in the most defensible way, that simply creating a rule that is something we want rather than something that respects the rights with defensibility in a challenge—they're two different things. We have an obligation to create an act that has defensibility in the case of a challenge.

This is about the impact on people's personal safety—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

Interjection: Your time is up.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Is my time up? Okay.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): As a matter of fact, the time provided for private members' public business has expired.

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT (NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATIONS), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES (PERSONNES MORALES À BUT NON LUCRATIF)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will deal first with ballot item number 7, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will call in the members and have a division.

SMOKE-FREE ONTARIO AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI FAVORISANT UN ONTARIO SANS FUMÉE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): We will now deal with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Mrs. Savoline. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It's carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 96, we will have—I'm sorry. This bill is referred to the standing committee—

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to refer this bill to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Savoline has asked that this bill be referred to the standing committee on finance. Is it agreed? Agreed.

Now we'll call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1159 to 1204.

DAY NURSERIES AMENDMENT ACT (NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATIONS), 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES GARDERIES (PERSONNES MORALES À BUT NON LUCRATIF)

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Day Nurseries Act to limit the approval of corporations to not for profit corporations / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les garderies afin de limiter l'agrément de personnes morales aux personnes morales à but non lucratif.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mrs. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 26. All those in favour, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri
Gélinas, France
Horwath, Andrea

Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul

Prue, Michael
Ruprecht, Tony
Tabuns, Peter

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please stand until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hardeman, Ernie

Hoy, Pat
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leal, Jeff
Miller, Norm
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Oraziotti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pendergast, Leeanna
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramal, Khalil

Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Savoline, Joyce
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Monique
Sorbara, Greg
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakabuski, John
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 11; the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All matters relating to private members' public business having been dealt with, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1207 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SAMUEL DE CHAMPLAIN

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise in the House today. I want to comment on the 400th anniversary of the coming of Samuel de Champlain, a French explorer and one of the founders of our country.

I want to bring it forward to this House because the 400th anniversary will be taking place in the year 2015. I have with me a deputation of people from my riding whom you will introduce a little later on who are here today helping me promote this special event, but what I am really wanting to say today is that, as Samuel de Champlain went across Canada, so has the celebration of his explorations. In fact, this year in the province of Quebec, in a partnership between the province of Quebec and the federal government, tens of millions of dollars are being spent on the promotion of the 400th anniversary of this event. You may have heard some of the

radio and TV ads. We're already promoting this special event in the province of Quebec.

What I would like to see happen in this House, in a non-partisan manner, is for everyone to get together and look at what we can do as parliamentarians, working with our federal parliamentarians, to promote this very special event when it takes place in the year 2015.

I know it's seven years away from this summer, but the reality is that time flies quickly and there's a lot of planning to do. I would like to see the Ontario government work with the federal government to receive tens of millions of dollars to promote this special event. I thank every member of this House and wish them well as they try to work with me to promote the 400th anniversary of the coming of Samuel de Champlain to Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm just going to take this opportunity—I have some further introductions that I will make later, but I know the member has guests who are here promoting the 400th anniversary of Champlain's coming to Ontario in 2015. We would just like to welcome Yvon Gagné, Ann Gagné, Matthew Desrochers, John Desrochers, Bob Nash, Terry Quealey—I apologize; the member's writing isn't clear—André Claire and David Dupuis.

Also, I'd just like to let the members know that, on members' behalf, I wrote to every mayor in the province of Ontario because on July 3, Quebec City is going to be ringing their bells. I have written to every mayor in Ontario asking that they consider ringing their bells in recognition of that celebration.

I apologize for the introduction, but I thank the member for bringing this most important event forward.

BRAMPTON SMALL BUSINESS ENTERPRISE CENTRE

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today in the House to recognize the Brampton Small Business Enterprise Centre, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary.

For the past decade, the enterprise centre has been a haven for aspiring business owners looking for planning resources and support services to implement their business vision. A joint project between the city of Brampton and the province of Ontario, the centre also partnered with HRDC, the Brampton Board of Trade, the Royal Bank, Microsoft and Bell.

Last year, in collaboration with the province of Ontario and the federal government, Brampton joined the BizPaL online network. It was one of the first municipalities in Canada and Ontario to do so. This reflects the centre's strong commitment to offering to local businesses and entrepreneurs innovative tools and resources to help them create and grow successful and thriving businesses.

The centre continues to offer personal, one-on-one assistance. Aspiring and new business owners appreciate the opportunity to speak with a live person, to learn in traditional classroom settings and to meet in person for

confidential consultations. They know how valuable personal discussion can be in a time when so much business is done through forms, websites and other automated processes. In the last 10 years, the dedicated staff have assisted with nearly 140,000 inquiries, more than 26,000 business registrations and 3,650 consultations, and more than 4,000 people have attended enterprise centre seminars and special events. Since 2004, nearly 17,000 jobs have been created.

Again, join me in recognizing the small business centre in Brampton for its remarkable service to the Brampton area.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Mrs. Julia Munro: Last week I was honoured to attend Men of Courage: the First Provincial Conference on Male Sexual Victimization, here in Toronto. It was hosted by the Men's Project, a counselling agency that has helped men and their families since 1997. They offer healing for men who have experienced sexual or physical abuse as children, anger management and fathering skills.

One of the issues raised at the conference that I give this government full credit for is calling for a public inquiry into the events in the Cornwall area. Former MPP Gary Guzzo also deserves a lot of credit as a driving force to hold this inquiry for many years.

Conference attendees also supported changes to the Criminal Code to increase protection for young people by raising the age of consent to 16 and toughen the dangerous offender provisions. I'm glad that the federal Liberals have finally seen the wisdom in allowing this bill to move forward.

Violence of any kind against any person is wrong. We should all be grateful for the work the Men's Project does to help heal male victims.

AGNES MACPHAIL

Mr. Michael Prue: The year 1993 was the 50th anniversary of the election to this House of Agnes Macphail, the first woman to take her seat in this Legislature.

That was also the year that the member of provincial Parliament for part of East York, Gary Malkowski, came before the council of the borough of East York and asked that the borough do something to recognize this historic and wonderful woman who had represented our community. It was the decision of the East York council to establish a yearly award to honour people who did great things and did them in a way that we thought Agnes Macphail would have approved.

Each and every year on the anniversary of her birth, March 24, we set aside in the borough of East York an opportunity to recognize an individual with outstanding contributions to our community. You'll be proud to know that we have done so even after amalgamation.

This year, the award went to Geoff Kettel. Geoff Kettel is a wonderful man who lives in the Leaside area

in East York. He has distinguished himself on the board of health he has worked in citizenship in helping newcomers he is an advocate in areas of law, a housing provider and an environmentalist. Not only did he get the award, but today is his last full day of work for the Ontario civil service. He will be retiring, and we in East York know we can count on him even more in the future to do the good things he has done in the past.

HOLI FESTIVAL

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On Sunday, March 23, I had the honour of joining the Holi festivities of the Hindu community in Hamilton. Holi festival is also sometimes called the festival of colours, which is celebrated to welcome spring, and what a welcome it was after the harsh Canadian winter we had.

I had the pleasure of attending the festival with my friends Vera and Ashok Kumar, who are members of the community. The festivities took place at the Hindu temple, Hindu Samaj of Hamilton. There were many cultural activities that afternoon, including a beautiful dance performed by a group of young children in bright costumes. The crowd was overwhelmed by the performance, as was I. The stage was filled with thousands of rose petals and it was absolutely beautiful.

The Hindu Samaj of Hamilton is a temple that stands as a monument of co-operation between many different community groups in Hamilton. I want to thank the Hindu community for their warm welcome. I had an opportunity to meet many of them and several of their community leaders.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Recently we witnessed yet another example of the games this Liberal government is prepared to play and the people they are prepared to use to further their own ends.

Two weeks ago, the Minister of Finance, with great pomp and ceremony, announced something called investing in Ontario communities. The gist of the announcement was that the government would dedicate a portion of its surplus to municipalities when the provincial surplus exceeded \$800 million.

1340

When the minister announced what is now clearly a phantom fund, his budget showing a much smaller surplus well below the proposed trigger number would have been at the printer. As the Minister of Finance stood there receiving the praise of Hazel McCallion and other mayors from across the province, he knew very well he was giving them sweet nothing—a kiss on the cheek from Hazel and sweet nothing for her voters; sweet nothing for Ontario municipalities; sweet nothing for the people of Ontario except more taxes, more spending and more barrelling down the wrong track towards the havenot status that the Liberal government has been aiming for for going on five years—shameful conduct on behalf

of this minister and the government he represents. The mayors who unwittingly participated in this sham announcement deserve an apology.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's with great pleasure today that I rise in the House to share with you how many of the great investments that were proposed in the budget will affect my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, situated in York region.

Aside from the many exciting initiatives that will affect all ridings, including mine, such as investments in health care, education and job skills, I'm very pleased that this budget has an emphasis on infrastructure. This is a key component to the ridings in rapidly growing York region, and Oak Ridges–Markham is no different. We all depend on public transit, roads and bridges to get our families to where they need to go in a safe and reliable manner. On top of that, investments in infrastructure create jobs in the short term and strengthen our economy in the long term.

From the \$497 million in 2007-08 for public transit, York region received funding for Metrolinx projects, including \$52 million for Viva Highway 7—Pine Valley Drive to Kennedy Road; \$89 million over two years for inter-regional GO Transit; and \$293 million for Yonge subway capacity improvement, which is part of the eventual Yonge subway extension to Richmond Hill.

This government understands the importance of investing in people. By making strong investments in our infrastructure today, we are creating a strong foundation on which the people of York region, and all Ontarians, can build and succeed.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Parents in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga believe in a strong, publicly funded education system. The recent Ontario budget was one of interest to them as it included significant new investments in our schools and in our students.

Parents in my community are not alone in their support for our education plan. Some of Ontario's leading educators are speaking out as well. I would like to share some of their positive words with you and with my colleagues.

John Campbell, chair of the Toronto District School Board, said, "There is another \$250 million coming to Ontario's schools, and I think on the whole the government has continued its really outstanding commitment to public education."

David Clegg, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, says, "We appreciate the \$315-million increase in per pupil funding announced in today's provincial budget as well as the new funding to support literacy, numeracy and special education."

Loralea Carruthers, vice-president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association, said that they ap-

preciate "the stability of funding and the recognition of the commitments that the government has already made to school boards, and we've seen those in the budget."

Marilyn Dulmage said, "All around, I think it's good news. The only surprise should be a happy one."

I am going to run out of time before I run out of educators who support this budget, and I'm sure every member of this House is hearing similar statements from educators and parents.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. David Oraziatti: Our government's 2008 budget is great news for Ontarians and certainly great news for the people in Sault Ste. Marie.

We have provided more resources for housing, public transit, infrastructure and our municipal partners. The \$1.5-billion skills-to-jobs program will help support Ontario workers, and we are eliminating the capital tax for businesses four years earlier than expected. In Sault Ste. Marie, we're providing \$15 million for a new invasive species centre, which will help expand our research and innovation capacity within the community, creating new jobs and further strengthening our local economy.

We're also providing \$1.4 million in additional capital funding for our hospice to help improve end-of-life care and ease pressure on our hospital. Helen Ross, the executive director, said, "The Ontario Liberal government has recognized the need for residential hospices and has moved forward to support all of us who believe that everyone has the right to die in dignity, free from pain and surrounded by their loved ones."

Despite the positive reaction from a wide array of provincial stakeholders, including the CAW, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Ontario Medical Association, the Conservatives and NDP have suggested that the Ontario government is not doing anything to help the provincial manufacturing and forestry industries. They must have our government confused with the federal Conservatives, who have yet to contribute a single cent to Ontario's forestry sector, since we have supported it with a \$1-billion aid package.

We're certainly not interested in economic lessons from a former member of this Legislature who saddled our province with a \$5.5-billion deficit. Even though the federal government is completely ignoring their responsibilities to Ontarians, our government is delivering on the priorities that Ontarians want and deserve.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RIGHT TO HOUSING ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 SUR LE DROIT AU LOGEMENT

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to establish the right to adequate housing as a universal human right / *Projet de loi 47, Loi visant à consacrer le droit à un logement convenable comme droit humain universel.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This Ontario government spends about 14 cents—actually less—a day on adequate affordable housing. That's less than half of what they spent in the year 2000. That's according to my friend Michael Shapcott here, of the Wellesley Institute.

This bill will, along with the United Nations, insist that housing be seen as a right, allowing the thousands waiting—125,000 households on the waiting list—to challenge this government's neglect.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

Hon. John Gerretsen: Our Premier, Premier McGuinty, has stated his commitment to ensuring stronger protections for Lake Simcoe. For the nearly 350,000 Ontarians living in communities close to Lake Simcoe, these protections are absolutely critical. But they're also very important for the many people who visit and enjoy the lake every year.

Earlier this afternoon, along with my colleagues, the member from Barrie and minister of culture, and my parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville, I had the pleasure of announcing three new measures by our government to protect Lake Simcoe and its watershed.

First, as of April 1 this year, new interim limits will be in place for phosphorous discharges from industrial and municipal sewage treatment plants. These measures will help protect water quality in Lake Simcoe while we work on developing a long-term protection strategy.

Secondly, we have formed the Lake Simcoe science advisory committee to ensure that our strategy, including any proposed legislation, is based on the best available science.

We need to better understand the issues facing the health of Lake Simcoe and its watershed and look at what actions we must take to improve and protect the health of the ecosystem.

I was joined this afternoon by many stakeholders that have an interest in the lakes, but as well, by Dr. Jennifer Winter, one of the co-chairs of the Lake Simcoe advisory committee, together with Dr. Peter Dillon, who will be the other co-chair. They will use their considerable scientific experience and knowledge of Lake Simcoe to look at the present state of the lake and its watershed, the

pressures on the system today and in the future and to provide advice on how best to approach managing it.

We are committed as a government to developing a strategy that joins together both environmental protection and planning growth. Our goal is not only to protect Lake Simcoe, but set a benchmark for sustainability.

Our government recognizes that a great many people are passionate about this issue and want to be involved in protecting the Lake Simcoe ecosystem. This is the reason for the third measure announced today—the release of a discussion paper on the Environmental Bill of Rights registry.

1350

We are consulting with Ontarians so we can develop a long-term, comprehensive strategy that will work for everyone.

Our government recognizes farmers are already doing a lot of good work to reduce the amount of phosphorus going into the lake. We will consult with them and the entire farming community to find ways to reduce it even further.

We also want to get input from cottagers, recreational users, business individuals and corporations, First Nations communities, environmental groups and municipalities—everyone who cares about protecting and sustaining the lake. We know that there are a lot of good ideas out there, and we simply want to hear them.

We will also be creating a stakeholder advisory committee to advise us on the best approaches to improve the long-term future of the lake.

With the pressures from population growth, urban and rural development, new invasive species and climate change, we need to take strong actions now to protect our water so that it stays healthy and protected.

What we do today will build a better, more sustainable environment and a brighter future for ourselves and our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of the Environment. First of all, I want to congratulate the members that you've appointed to the advisory committee. I wish them well in their work.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that in 2006 I introduced a private member's bill followed by a Lake Simcoe protection resolution that was successfully passed by this Legislature. I know that both the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party campaigned in the 2007 election with strategies or potential protection acts that would have a positive impact on Lake Simcoe.

The minister will recall that in his former position as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing he began the IGAP process, the intergovernmental action plan. The very minimum number of people who are expected to live in Simcoe county in the next 25 years is 247,000 people, which is a 60% increase in the population. There's no question that whatever growth occurs in

Simcoe county will have a major effect on Simcoe county and of course on the water quality in Lake Simcoe.

The Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority acknowledges that it will cost a minimum right now of \$170 million to clean up Lake Simcoe and protect it in its present form. We can study this thing to death, but one thing that will be required will be money. We'll need money for infrastructure projects and cleanup as well.

I can tell you right now that I was disappointed in the provincial budget on Tuesday because I would have expected, following the federal budget and the federal announcement where the federal government has committed \$30 million to cleanup projects, that you would have seen some money for cleanup projects on Lake Simcoe. So you've got to come to the table. First of all, you absolutely have to create a partnership with the federal government. This is no time to finger-point at each other. This is a time when everyone has to be at the table to make sure we clean up this beautiful asset that we have. So money is needed, of course.

I also want to point out that there are lots of ideas out there. I agree with the minister that there are a number of things we can do. I look at some of the new technologies that are available in sewage treatment, but those same technologies are available in all the septic systems that surround Lake Simcoe. There are literally tens of thousands of septic beds in communities around Lake Simcoe. I think we should look very seriously, as we go down this road, at allowing this technology to proceed and actually have these sorts of systems installed.

I know there was a conference just a few weeks ago in Mr. Miller's riding, the onsite septic system installers and contractors' conference—and unbelievable technology out there for the future. I'm sure we're going to have to grasp hold of that.

I think I speak on behalf of our caucus and most people around Lake Simcoe. I know I have 100 kilometres of shoreline in my riding on Lake Simcoe. The protection of Lake Simcoe is a priority. We really do want to work with you, but we want to make sure this is not a finger-pointing game, that we all work together—federal government, provincial government, and municipalities—to make sure that the development that takes place around Lake Simcoe is positive and enhances the quality of the water in Lake Simcoe, and not let it deteriorate it any further but improve it.

Mr. Speaker, I have a minute or so left. I would like to let the member from York-Simcoe say a few words as well.

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

Mrs. Julia Munro: The minister in his statement earlier made reference to the fact that he expects support from the opposition. I want to be very clear about the fact that I, too, share an obvious interest in the lake and have certainly tried very hard over the years in working with community groups and bringing forward any ideas that

would support this. So I want to say at the outset that I think the minister was fairly safe in making those comments about the opposition.

But while I, again, applaud the idea of having a science committee, a committee of experts in reviewing, I have some questions. What happened to the LSEMS agreement? It expired. It was only renewed for a single year instead of the normal five. It takes money to continue. MNR needs to have money to be able to provide the right science and studies on Lake Simcoe.

LAKE SIMCOE WATERSHED

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's no question that we have a problem in Lake Simcoe; none at all. I listen to the minister; I listen to Rick Smith from Environmental Defence. You can talk to anyone in that region, and you know you've got problems with phosphorus, you've got problems with algae, you've got problems with the lake, which some characterize as at the tipping point.

That lake, aside from its natural value, is worth something like \$200 million a year in tourism. So economically, environmentally and biologically it's an important place. And so, given that you have statements like "a lake at the tipping point," what's the scale of response of this government to this challenge?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To consult.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To consult. This minister talks about population growth. Well, my goodness, is this a government that has the power to actually put south Simcoe into the greenbelt? Is this a government that would have the power to have opposed Big Bay Point? Is this a government that could have helped the citizens who opposed Big Bay Point? No. This government will talk about the problem and is very happy to put in place a science committee. I've got no quarrel with the people who are on it, but in terms of what has to be done and the scale of the problem and the immediacy of the problem, this is dereliction.

The cap that was announced today: It may well be—and I'm interested in seeing numbers—that the cap on sewage going from sewage treatment plants will allow more sewage to go into the lake. I don't know; I'd have to see the numbers. Based on what we were given, it looks like there may well be an increase in sewage. The way the minister was talking about this cap making accommodation for new development, it sounds to me like more sewage going into the lake. That doesn't sound like the direction we want to be going in.

If you look at the material that was provided to us, this government could act now to deal with a problem that's twice as big as the problem from sewage, and that's stormwater going straight into the lake. You don't have to wait a year; you don't have to wait five years. You don't need another report. If you've got stormwater going into the lake, you need to put in place measures that stop that happening. That's twice the problem we have from these sewage treatment plants—twice the problem.

So you've got some things that you can do immediately, within your control and in your hands, to deal with a lake that's facing profound problems, and you're not doing them. You're putting money into the extension of the 404: \$250 million. That will mean more development on the lake and further pressure on the biological viability of that lake. Is that rational? Is that something that's within the power of the government to decide? Absolutely. Is it going to act? Absolutely not.

Enforcement: The member from Hamilton East and the member from Hamilton Centre have both dealt with problems in Hamilton where environmental laws are not enforced. So, frankly, you can announce as much as you want. If in the end you don't have the people on the ground to enforce and you don't move forward, then really it's just a law that's a pretty bauble, maybe a fashion statement, but not something that is of consequence. Talk to these members about the issues they face in their communities. Talk to the Environmental Commissioner and read his report. You know that you're not enforcing the law. Why would we have any confidence that it will be enforced in this case? I don't see why we would have confidence in that.

1400

You talked about climate change and its impact on this lake, and yet last year, when the Premier talked about his climate change plan, his legislation that he would bring forward—we haven't seen a plan; we haven't seen any legislation. I have to tell you that the environmentalist who commented on this budget, Keith Stewart, from the World Wildlife Fund, said, "Not here," for action on climate change. You have some targets that you put out there to decorate your platform, but in terms of actually leaving a world for our kids that will matter to them, Minister, you're not doing what has to happen. You've set it aside. You are not willing to take on the tough task. You're not willing to put the money in place. You're not willing to put the legislation in place. So in the end what that means is that this lake will continue to be in trouble and this province will be in trouble. You are not acting the way you could act within the powers you have and you're not acting the way you must act, given your responsibilities. I don't think you have anything to be proud of today. In fact, you should just go back to your office and hope this day passes quietly.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Leader of the Opposition on a point of order?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Mr. Speaker, this may be more on a point of privilege, and I'll look for your advice. It appears on the surface as a breach of the rights and privileges of the opposition members of this Legislature. We were told last night, and again today, in terms of the municipal roads and bridges fund, that members of the government party are making announcements across the province in terms of allocations. The information is not being shared with members on this

side of the House. This may not be the tyranny of the majority but it certainly appears to be the arrogance of the majority.

Hon. Michael Bryant: First, the parliamentary requirements that the member is referring to are with respect to presumptions about what the Legislative Assembly of Ontario will or will not do, the ultimate example being Minister Leach's jumping of the gun in terms of suggesting that a law had passed when it in fact had not. None of the correspondence, none of the public statements, none of the releases and none of the publications that have been put out by the ministry had come anywhere close to violating that. The member may not like the fact that we're doing good things, but we're going to continue to do them and talk about them as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll take the member's point under advisement and consult with the table and I will report back to the House. Thank you.

WEARING OF PINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I had a chance earlier to speak to you about this. As you know, today is March 27, international day of epilepsy, and we've been given these pins to wear by members in the gallery. I ask for unanimous consent so that we can wear them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

VISITOR

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the west members' gallery to recognize a young lady named Brett Winslow. She is here from the University of Akron on the legislative intern program and has been working in my office. This is her second-to-last day, the last day the Legislature will be sitting. I appreciate all her hard work and ask the members of the Legislature to show our appreciation for her coming to Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, and we thank the other two interns as well who have been here from the University of Akron. We trust that it has been a good opportunity for them to learn more about the parliamentary system here in Canada.

The member has left, but I do want to acknowledge that he was here: The former member for York Centre from the 32nd and 33rd Parliaments, and the 34th and 35th Parliaments for Markham, Don Cousens, was here, but he did have to leave. We acknowledge his presence.

As well, on behalf of the member for Northumberland—Quinte West, we welcome Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, and their daughter Jane, who are here to visit their daughter Tola, who is a page in the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

On behalf of the member for Hamilton Mountain, we'd like to welcome Mr. John Dolbec, the CEO of the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, who is here today as well.

On behalf of the member for Peterborough, I'd like to welcome Mr. Paul Dietrich, president of Parkview Homes and president of the Peterborough and the Kawartha Home Builders Association and vice-president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, and his son Thomas Wilson, here in the east gallery. Welcome to you as well.

On behalf of the member for Parkdale-High Park, we have Mr. Shapcott from the Wellesley Institute, and a number of individuals from the St. Stephen's Community House staff and clients, some of whom have experienced homelessness. We'd like to welcome those individuals. As well, from the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, we have Sherrie Golden. To those individuals, welcome to Queen's Park today as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Premier. This government has refused to acknowledge the endless economic warnings that Ontarians have been bombarded with for months. Now the deputy chief economist of Desjardins Group has confirmed what everyone but your government has seen coming: Ontario will be in a recession in the early part of this year, a technical recession.

Rather than attack this crisis head-on with a bold, courageous, long-term battle plan, after burying its head in the sand with its tax-and-spend regime, this government is now ducking for cover, "battening down the hatches," as the media have reported on it, with their budget. It's filled with one-time, one-year measures that will do nothing to protect people's jobs and help them pay their bills. This budget has failed the people of Ontario. Premier, where is your long-term recession-fighting plan? It's certainly not in your budget.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the member for the question. We have a plan; you just don't like the plan. It's a five-point plan. It's designed not only to address our interim challenges associated with the economy, but it's also designed in the long term to enhance our productivity and our strength. That plan consists of five parts, not one part. A one-part plan would consist exclusively of cutting corporate income taxes.

We are cutting business taxes, as you well know, but beyond that we're also investing heavily in the skills and education of our people, because the best workers get the best jobs. We're investing in innovation, because we want to do more to help Ontarians turn their ideas into products and services that will be in demand on the part of a global economy. We're investing heavily in

infrastructure—roads and bridges—so that we can create jobs in the short term and enhance our productivity in the long term. We also believe in entering into strategic partnerships with the business community. We've done that in the past and we intend to continue doing it long into the future.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I think the National Post summed up the government's plan pretty succinctly: "Good times: Spend and tax; Bad times: Spend and tax." Ontario is seeing the loss of almost 200,000 manufacturing jobs, and predictions are that another 250,000 will disappear in the next two years. The retraining plan, which this government touts as the major highlight of its budget, is only going to help 20,000 people. That's less than 5% of the people who can't pay their mortgages, who can't provide for their families.

Ontarians need a government and a leader who can put out a blazing fire in the economy, and this Premier comes armed with an eyedropper. Premier, why didn't you use this budget to bring in a comprehensive, multi-year economic growth package so that hard-working families, businesses and municipalities can plan for the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's difficult to understand where the Conservative Party is coming from these days, because they criticize us, on the one hand, for failing to cut corporate income taxes in a dramatic and reckless fashion. That would deprive us of a revenue base of, in combination with the removal of the health premium, some \$5 billion. They're saying we should have done that, and they're also saying at the same time that we haven't invested enough in new skills and education opportunities for the people of Ontario. You can't have it both ways. I think leadership demands that you make some difficult decisions. We've decided to cut some business taxes, but we've also decided to invest in our people. The reason that we remain so hopeful, the reason that we refuse to panic, is because we believe in the people of Ontario. It's their entrepreneurialism, their energy, their dedication and their commitment that have created 450,000 net new jobs in the last four years alone.

1410

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: This country is going in another direction, but only the Premier knows best in this country, apparently.

This budget was an opportunity to chart out a long-term plan, to lay out the welcome mat for investment, to tell working people that they don't have to leave Ontario to find well-paying and secure jobs. Economic recovery does need a bold, aggressive, multi-year plan, and it doesn't happen with your approach of tossing out one-time, one-year crumbs and there's no plan for anything more to come.

Premier, you were on CP24 this morning, and you've been saying what we've been saying for months: that you can be short-sighted. Will you commit to immediately bringing in a multi-year economic stimulus package that will get Ontario out of the recession that's clearly on our doorstep? Premier, the people of Ontario are looking for

strong leadership to take them through tough economic times, and your budget is failing them.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The leader of the official opposition tells us he's looking for something that's bold and aggressive and multi-year in nature. I want to remind him about our new proposal found within this budget. It says that if you create a new business in the province of Ontario during the course of the next 10 years, whether you enjoy a profit of \$1,000 or \$1 billion, you will pay zero income tax. Now, there is a catch. You've got to base that business on an idea that comes from any Canadian college, university or research institute. It's the only idea of its kind, to my knowledge, in North America. That's bold, it's aggressive, it's multi-year; it's in keeping with the innovative abilities and the aspirations of Ontario entrepreneurs.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: With all due respect, we've seen your plan before. It's the same old failed tax-and-spend policy that got your now federal Liberal cousin Bob Rae's government to the deepest recession in the province of Ontario since the Second World War. Now we hear concerns of a potential Dalton McGuinty recession in the province of Ontario. After this budget, Ontario now stands alone in embracing the old tax-and-spend policies of the past. Other provinces have moved forward, reduced the tax and regulatory burden and have attracted new well-paying jobs.

I ask the Premier: What makes him so smart and the rest of the Premiers wrong? Aren't they on the right track when their job creation has dwarfed private sector job creation in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's a bit of a myth that my good friends opposite are looking to perpetuate, and that is that somehow the jobs that are being created in Ontario are exclusively falling within the domain of the public service. I wanted to speak to that with a couple of facts. First of all, we are now running the second-most-efficient provincial government operation in the country. Secondly, we have the fewest number of civil servants per capita in the country. So I say to my friend opposite, as he likes to bandy this myth about, from time to time he should visit the truth and he will understand that we're actually doing very well in that regard—the second-most-efficient provincial government operation in the country and the fewest civil servants per capita in Canada.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you've got to be kidding. We have seen the \$100,000 club absolutely balloon under the Dalton McGuinty government here in the province of Ontario. I can't wait to see this list on Monday to see how many more bureaucrats he has hired in the \$100,000 club, because it will put his friend Bob Rae in a distant last place when it comes to increases in government spending. Premier, I think you know that Mary Webb, the Bank of Nova Scotia economist, described the pittance of tax relief that you boast about as only a one-time boost. It's like taking \$1,000 out of a working

family's pocket and expecting them to be happy that you gave them a loonie back in change. Your policies have brought Ontario to the verge of a potential McGuinty recession. Isn't it time that you followed the path of the other provinces and created a positive environment for business investment and private sector job creation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just so we can remove it from the abstract to the concrete, let's understand what my friend is railing against. He says that we should not have expanded some folks who have been hired in the broader public sector. Let's listen to some of the people they would not have us hire: nurses, MRI and CT technologists, home care workers, public health unit inspectors, water inspectors, meat inspectors, labour inspectors, teachers, librarians in our schools, guidance counsellors in our schools, autism therapists for our children, children's aid society social workers, child care staff, university and college professors, crown attorneys, police officers, parole and probation officers, and bus, subway and streetcar drivers.

What I'd ask my friend to do is understand that when he tells us we should be cutting corporate income taxes, what he's really saying, and should say to Ontarians, is that he wants these people to be fired.

Mr. Tim Hudak: If the Premier looked at the success in other provinces, and looked at the success under the previous PC government of one million net new jobs being created in Ontario, a record in private sector job creation that was the envy of North America—Premier, your record, on the other hand, has created maybe a net 100,000 private sector jobs, which the previous PC government created on average in a single year alone. Where you'll be the star, where you'll be the gold medal winner, is bloating the civil service and the \$100,000 club that we'll see on Monday when that list comes out.

Premier, isn't it time to stimulate the economy? Isn't it time to avoid the McGuinty Ontario recession by cutting taxes on businesses and working families today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will say that I do look back with some envy at the economic conditions that prevailed when the Conservatives were in government. They had a 60-cent dollar, they had oil at \$30 a barrel and they had the economy of our greatest trading partner, the US, growing at a very good clip. Notwithstanding that, they left us with a \$5.5-billion deficit, they closed hospitals, they fired nurses, they attacked public education and they fired water inspectors.

We are not going back to those days. We have a balanced, responsible, thoughtful approach to grow this economy and, at the same time, protect public services that the people of Ontario are entitled to be able to count on every single day.

PROVINCIAL PURCHASING POLICY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Last week your government voted down the NDP's Buy Ontario bill calling for 50% local content for mass transit vehicles. Then, under the cloak of the Easter long

weekend, your government announced a watered-down sell-out Ontario plan that mandates a paltry 25% local content for transit vehicles. Why is this Premier so intent on selling out Ontario manufacturing jobs in the transit sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm actually glad that the member asked this particular question, because it allows me to talk about his good friends on the city council of Toronto, who I think are very pragmatic when they're in government. The reason they're pragmatic in government is that they know they have to make decisions based on very careful assessment of a situation. They want to determine that what they are doing is best, in their case for their municipality, as well as for the province.

You will know that when you put forward your particular proposal, it has a tendency to place us somewhat in jeopardy in terms of the exports we have. Ontario is the most export-oriented jurisdiction I can think of. If you want to place that in jeopardy—I know you wouldn't, because you are a member who understands well, being a member of this House for a long time, how important exports are.

We have a balance that I think most people will think is very reasonable. It will be helpful, and certainly the city of Toronto—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. Supplementary?

1420

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's interesting that you cite the city of Toronto, because a Liberal councillor in the city of Toronto got this particular motion passed yesterday, and it reads as follows: "That the TTC clarify its position that 25% Canadian content applies to the first phase of the LRT purchase, and further that the chair and mayor be requested to urge the government of Ontario to set a higher requirement for transit purchases in Ontario."

Since this government claims to be taking the lead from the TTC with the sell-out Ontario plan, why won't it now admit it made a mistake, and adopt the NDP's 50% Buy Ontario plan?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to say to my good friend from the north that I wish it were that easy and that simple. It really isn't.

I must say this as well. In fairness to my friend from the north, I say this: I was a member of the opposition as well, and I know that in opposition you have certain liberties that you can take, certain proposals that you can make to the people of the province. They sound very good in opposition, and we all recognize that. We've all been there; I have to say that.

But we analyzed it very carefully. We got some good advice on this. We believe, for instance, that in the projects we're talking about, almost 82% of the spending on these transit projects of \$17.5 billion will automatically be spent in the province of Ontario. In addition to that, the procurement of the rolling stock will add even more to that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, it's not just the NDP opposition that's calling for this. It's the Toronto Star and most of the Ontario media, but more important, it's the council of the city of Toronto that has taken this position as well.

So you can't have it both ways. You can't one day say, "Oh, we're going to do what the city of Toronto says and we're just going to do 25%," and then the next day, when they clarify their position and say, "Clearly we need more than 25%," say that it doesn't work.

My question is this: When will this Premier understand that you need to take your heads out of the sand as a government and do what's right by supporting this 50% Buy Ontario bill put forward by the NDP?

Hon. James J. Bradley: One of the things that we felt was very important, first of all, is that we build and extend subways. I know you probably didn't agree, but your leader, remember, was against extending a subway north of Toronto. The people in Thunder Bay said they could not understand that.

With that project alone, millions of dollars would be spent in the province of Ontario; a lot of jobs would have been created. I recognize that what the city of Toronto actually did, as opposed to a resolution coming to another level of government, is very revealing. I commend the city of Toronto on the action they took. I looked carefully, when examining all the jurisdictions, at what Toronto had proposed. We came down on the side of what Toronto had actually done as an entity in power, and I'll tell you, they're pretty smart people.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to know if the Premier can please point out where child care appears as a line item in the McGuinty short-change budget.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you very much for the question. It gives me an opportunity to reiterate our commitment to child care in this province. As you know, we've already created 22,000 new spaces in this province, and we have expanded the number of people eligible for subsidies, because we understand how important child care is, not just for the parents who are able to work because they have good-quality, licensed child care, but also for the kids, because we know that kids who get a good start in life go on to be successful.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I guess my question hasn't yet been answered. I want to know what line item in this budget speaks to the issue of child care.

The members across the way should know that in the Quebec budget that came out about two weeks ago, there is a \$600-million line item for child care. If it can be done in Quebec, it can be done in Ontario. So I want to know: Where is the child care line in Ontario's short-change budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would suggest to the member that she look at page 51 in the budget.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The bottom line is this: You can look on every single page of this budget, and nary a word, practically, about child care. There is no line item in this budget, and everybody who's had a look at it, including all of the stakeholders in child care, know that there's no line item for child care.

How is it that Quebec can deliver \$7-a-day child care? How can it be that parents in Quebec can have children in child care for \$2,000 a year where in Ontario it costs families \$18,000 a year for one child in child care? It's because this government is not committed to the provision of child care in this province. Why is the McGuinty Liberal government killing new investment in public child care in the province of Ontario, and why are parents having to continue to pay extremely high fees for child care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Perhaps the member opposite has missed the announcement that we're actually investigating a very important initiative in child care, an initiative that will bring full-day learning to four- and five-year-olds in Ontario, an initiative that will free up thousands of spaces across this province for children in child care.

Our commitment to children is beyond reproach. The new Ontario child benefit will start rolling out every month—up to \$50 per child per month starting this July, and growing to \$91 per child per month. It's an important commitment to the children of the province and an important commitment to our future.

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, he was forced to come clean on where his Second Career strategy funds were coming from. It came from Prime Minister Harper's community development fund. It's federal money.

Today, I would like to know why he waited until just now to arrange signing the framework agreement and why he included federal money as a major investment in his budget without first signing on the dotted line.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I was very pleased, in my press conference and in all public pronouncements, to acknowledge the federal contribution to the skills training fund. I'm delighted that today we have been able to finalize the trusts that have been established for the community development fund for new police and acknowledge that the Prime Minister indicated today that it's important to work with his provincial counterparts. We are delighted to do that even though there are issues we don't agree on and even though that approach is very different from the approach of last Monday.

I'm delighted that we could sign these trusts. There's a lot more to do. We've outlined what those areas are. But when the federal and provincial governments work together, we can make things better for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thanks, Minister. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I bet the minister was the kid who spent his allowance before his parents gave it to him.

This government has led Ontarians to believe that the money for skills training was already there. They didn't tell Ontarians it was federal money until after my question yesterday. First, the Premier criticized the federal government's trust that is funding the Second Career strategy. Next, the finance minister takes the federal fund, gives it a new name and pretends it's his own. Now we find out the minister didn't do his homework. He has just signed off on the framework agreement and he is just now securing the funds for the centrepiece of his budget.

So I ask the minister: Tell this House how we can trust you with the budget, the financial planning of the government and managing taxpayers' dollars.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's a shame she's trying to drive a wedge between us and the federal government.

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the honourable member: Don't take my word for it. Take the word of the Toronto Star; take the word of the Globe and Mail; take the word of the Windsor Star; take the word of the Sudbury newspaper; take the word of 19 editorials in support of this budget; take the word of Len Crispino, president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, and Ian Howcroft, president of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters; take the word of Hazel McCallion, Doug Reycraft, David Miller.

Our five-point plan is the right response to a challenging time. This party gets it. This party is working through these challenging times. We're delighted to welcome federal assistance in any way it comes—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister. New question.

1430

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Yesterday, the Solicitor General denied any knowledge of OPP Commissioner Julian Fantino telling officers they should use force, if necessary, when facing protests last June on the aboriginal day of action.

Will this minister tell the House when he was first advised of Commissioner Fantino's police crackdown?

Hon. Michael Bryant: Quite rightly, the police operations would have been developed independently. I would be referring this question to the minister responsible for community safety if he were here.

The good news is that at the end of that day, of course, it was a peaceful day. As well, the national chief, Mr. Fontaine, has referred to the need, primarily with respect to the federal funding of health care and education on reserves, for further concern to be expressed in the 2008 national day of action. I know the member is very supportive of improving the living conditions of aborig-

inal peoples, not only in his riding in northern Ontario but across the province.

Hon. James J. Bradley: He should be the leader.

Hon. Michael Bryant: Well, that's—I know that the member will want to encourage nothing but peaceful protests, and I look forward to working with the member on aboriginal affairs in the days and weeks and months to come.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Further to the minister: You know that this has serious implications on the already fragile relationship between First Nations and the McGuinty government. We have aboriginal leaders who are in jail, and the police plan to break up native protests using force.

Our question is simply this: When will the minister tell Commissioner Fantino to read the Ipperwash Linden report on police conduct?

Hon. Michael Bryant: It's the Dalton McGuinty government that called for the public inquiry into the events leading to the death of Dudley George. It was the Dalton McGuinty government that received the report and made a commitment to, in fact, implement the Ipperwash commission recommendations. It's the Dalton McGuinty government that established the group, as asked for by First Nations, Metis and Inuit leadership, to establish a committee that would determine the implementation of that report on all matters involving all ministries.

We will continue to implement the Ipperwash commission recommendations, and I look forward to getting the member's support on that front. We already have begun to implement Ipperwash commission recommendations in the form of the creation of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, in the form of the return of the Ipperwash Park within weeks of taking office for a second term, and much, much more to come. We look forward to making great progress on that front.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The riding of York South–Weston is home to many hard-working people who have spent their lives caring for their families. Our seniors helped build this country. They are our parents and our grandparents. They depend on our government to provide them with support systems so they can live with dignity in their advanced years.

I have heard from many of my constituents who are concerned about family members who can no longer remain in their own residences and must transfer to long-term-care homes. In fact, I am sure we all know someone who is in a long-term-care home, and we want them to receive the best care possible.

The minister said he was going to address care issues in long-term care. My constituents would like to know what the minister has done so far.

Hon. George Smitherman: I appreciate very much the chance to answer the question. I know well of the

people the member speaks of, given that that is the riding where I was born, and I've had the privilege of spending some time campaigning there.

Through the efforts we've made so far, we have been able to add 9.55 million hours of additional care in our long-term-care homes. That represents about 6,100 additional front-line staff. That means that we've gone from 2.6 hours of paid care per resident day to 2.94 hours of paid care per resident day. But in addition to that, we've enhanced by 36% the amount of funding that we have for food in our long-term-care homes, and we've increased the comfort allowance. That's something that allows our long-term-care residents to make payments for personal items and for gifts for family members. When we came to office, that hadn't been touched in more than a decade.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: The minister has been talking about these investments a lot recently, and I'm sure there are residents who are benefiting. However, I know that in my own riding of York South–Weston there are homes that need more staff and more resources so they can provide enhanced quality care to residents. Would the minister tell my constituents how the money announced in Tuesday's budget will turn into real help that our seniors desperately need?

Hon. George Smitherman: I do very much look forward to the opportunity at estimates to discuss this with the opposition parties because they have been unable to read the budget documents to date.

As a result of the commitments made by the Minister of Finance and our government, I'm very pleased to tell everyone who is interested that the long-term-care sector will be receiving an increase of more than \$280 million this year. That represents a nearly 10% increase in funding for long-term care. That will be about base services. It will also be about enhancing the proportion of people who are working for our loved ones in long-term care by adding 864 additional personal support workers; that's the equivalent of 1.68 million additional hours of care. We'll be implementing a regulated minimum average standard of care, and over the course of next few years our investments in a total of 2,500 personal support workers and 2,000 nurses will represent more than eight million additional hours of care at the bedside, which will allow us to raise to 3.25 the minimum average standard of paid care in our long-term-care homes—very substantial progress since we began this mission.

MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On March 18, the Minister of Finance introduced a bill in this House that he said at the time of introduction would result in a minimum of \$200 million in additional capital funding. In his statement he said, and I quote, that this funding will be "above and beyond the investments and supports the province already provides." At the time, Mayor McCallion welcomed that announcement. In fact, she was quoted as saying, "It depends on how much money we get. No matter how much, even if it

is only a little, it will help with infrastructure needs in" the city of Mississauga. Will the minister tell the House and Mayor McCallion whether, when he introduced his legislation on March 18, he knew that in fact his budget would show a \$200-million shortfall from triggering the very legislation he introduced that day?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What I said was that we won't know our final revenue numbers for the year that has just passed until subsequent to the budget presentation. Our best estimate right now without those is that the surplus will be \$600 million. I note for the member that there was \$1 billion of money for infrastructure. Some of that will accrue to Mississauga and other municipalities in the greater Toronto area. Once public accounts are completed and the auditor audited our books, we will know precisely what the amount available for additional infrastructure for municipalities is, and we anticipate that that will be sometime in the summer upon publication of public accounts.

Mr. Frank Klees: That is not what the minister said when he introduced the legislation. It is not what the expectation was of anyone—certainly no one on this side of the House—who heard his announcement.

I would like to know: Either the Minister of Finance was knowingly leaving Mayor McCallion with the false expectation that she and her municipality would be receiving additional funds, or the minister, seven days before he was to table his budget in this House, was not aware that his surplus would be \$600 million, not the \$800 million it would take to trigger the legislation he was introducing. Which is it? Did the minister know what was in the books, or did he knowingly leave municipalities and this House with the false impression that additional infrastructure funding would be forthcoming for municipalities?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: What the municipalities know is, they got \$1 billion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Halton, would you please withdraw your comment?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Would you please withdraw your comment?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdrawn.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite referenced Mayor Hazel McCallion. Let me just read to him what she said on the day of the budget:

"I think that the budget has dealt with a lot of challenges that we're facing in Ontario, such as unemployment and the programs they've come forward with to get people retrained.... So the budget was an overall big advancement, in my opinion, for many things that we're facing, municipalities and the province as a whole—and I have to tell you, I really endorse, as you could see from the applause, that it's time that the federal Minister of Finance, Mr. Flaherty, stop recommending people not investing in Ontario. I think the Prime Minister should get him under control."

Not only do municipalities get \$1 billion in the budget; they, and we, will look forward that in the event that the surplus exceeds \$800 million, every penny of that, from \$600 million over, will accrue to municipal infrastructure, adding to the tens of billions we've already spent.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question actually was for the Minister of Housing, but perhaps he's not here today because of the gaffe he made yesterday. So I will direct—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I remind the member that we're not to make reference to the attendance of one of the members, and just ask her to keep that in mind. Thank you.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: So reminded, Mr. Speaker. So I will direct my question to the Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask that you see the uproar that it causes within the House. You're letting your own clock run. Just acknowledge that you should not have made that comment. Thank you.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker, and ask my question to the Premier.

Yesterday, the Minister of Housing said that money in the budget had been allocated for new affordable housing; it has not. The meagre \$100 million is simply to repair existing buildings. I ask then: Why has this government allocated no money for new affordable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've certainly tried to be very clear in this regard. We're using some of our year-end money—\$100 million, in fact—to repair some 4,000 units. That would help nearly 10,000 Ontarians.

You will understand that we are in a period of slow economic growth. We've received all kinds of pressure from the right, saying that we should cut taxes in a dramatic and reckless way. We have refused to do that. Notwithstanding these challenging economic times, we think it's important for us to move forward on a new front, in a thoughtful way, towards poverty reduction in the province of Ontario.

That's why we have in place a new poverty reduction committee, headed up by Minister Matthews. We have already moved forward with respect to a new dental plan for our working poor. We're doubling the student nutrition program to ensure that kids in school are not hungry and are capable of learning. We've done something on housing and we look forward to doing more on housing.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly, with 125,000 households waiting for eight to 10 years on average for affordable housing, that is not an adequate answer. We have homeless in our gallery here, so I would ask the Premier again: Since homeless are dying on the streets of Toronto, why is there no money allocated for new affordable housing in this budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my colleague that there are 18,000 new units being built. We are putting in place 35,000 rent supplements. Beyond that \$100 million, we've also put in place now, through this OSIFA mechanism, the ability for our housing authorities to borrow up to 500 million additional dollars to make additional capital improvements.

There is a need, obviously, for us to do more in the area of housing. There's a need for us to do more in the matter of poverty generally. That's why we've decided to take this on in a thoughtful way. We'll be putting in place—I've asked Minister Matthews to come forward with some recommendations. We're looking for some specific indicators that we can agree upon when it comes to poverty. We're looking for some specific targets and a focused strategy to help us get there. We want to do something in a measurable, thoughtful way that's effective—something that no government, frankly, has done yet in Ontario.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, this Saturday, March 29, at 8 p.m., people across this province and around the world will turn off their lights for one hour, Earth Hour, to show their support for taking action on climate change.

Last year, Earth Hour made its debut in Sydney, Australia. It was an enormous success. This year, it has become a global phenomenon. Earth Hour 2008 will take place across six continents and involve millions of people. I know that in my community, the city of Ottawa has signed on to participate in Earth Hour, and families throughout Ottawa—Orléans and Ontario will be turning off their lights to mark Earth Hour and show their support for tackling climate change. Minister, is the Ontario government participating in Earth Hour?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to thank the member for the question, because indeed Earth Hour is an extraordinary global event in which Ontario is very proud to participate, particularly since it's only the second year since Earth Hour started. It sends a powerful message about making a difference. I would like to commend the World Wildlife Fund for the idea.

Canadians are showing their support. As a matter of fact, I think the website crashed yesterday with the number of people who tried to sign on from Canada and Ontario alone. Our government is glad to be part of that. I noted that at 8 o'clock on Saturday, all non-emergency lights in government buildings across Ontario, including the Legislature, will be switched off. I would like to thank the hard work of the Minister of Government and Consumer Services and his assistant, Peter Hargreave, and all those people who are involved in actually making it happen.

I would encourage all members of this House and all of our 67,000 Ontario civil servants to turn off their lights at home as well. I encourage everyone in this province to turn off their lights for one hour to see how one simple

action can make a difference as far as the environment is concerned.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Turning off the lights for one hour is a simple step everyone can take. Through this simple action, people will see first-hand how a simple change in their lifestyle can make a difference.

There's so much more that each and every one of us can do every day to reduce our environmental footprint. By taking transit, turning off appliances that aren't in use, and changing to energy-efficient light bulbs, we can all be part of the solution. High school students in Orléans are participating in the second annual Climate Change Challenge and preparing a video of what they can do as individuals to reduce their carbon footprint.

Minister, how is our government helping Ontarians to make the everyday changes that will make a big difference for our environment?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the member for that supplementary. Certainly our government wants to help Ontarians make those environmentally friendly choices.

First of all, we are making significant investments not only here in Toronto but throughout Ontario in transit. As you know, we intend to spend up to \$17 billion on some 52 projects around this province for people who take public transit rather than drive their own cars.

The home energy audit and retrofit programs provide rebates for energy audits and for home energy improvements.

Through sales tax rebates on hybrid electric vehicles, Ontarians can get up to \$2,000 by way of a rebate when they purchase a hybrid car.

In this week's budget alone, we are proposing a retail sales tax exemption on qualified new Energy Star household appliances and light bulbs to the end of August 2009—as well as bicycles. There are so many small things that we can all do, each and every one of us, in our day-to-day lives to make a difference for the environment.

Once again, we encourage Ontarians around this province to all take part in this Earth Hour on Saturday at 8 o'clock. Turn off your lights. Do it for the environment; do it for—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre de l'Ontario. When will the Premier commit to eliminating competitive bidding in home care?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not going to make that commitment. What my commitment remains is to ensure that we provide the best-quality home care. I understand the member's position on this, but it's not one that I can accept.

We think there's room to improve the competitive bidding process. The Minister of Health has acted on this

and frozen it for a time, but we want to take a look at it and make sure that we get it right.

One of the issues of concern that was drawn to my attention is that we need to attach more value to continuity of care. For example, Mr. Speaker, if we switch from one home care giver to another for your mother, that can represent a tremendous disruption in her life. So we need to find a way to attach value to continuity of care, but no, we won't completely reject outright the competitive bidding process.

1450

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really happy to hear that continuity of care will be a factor. But I want you to know that this week, the Ontario coalition, and today, home care workers and SEIU members, held a press conference to ask for an end to competitive bidding in home care. The Premier knows well that the current competitive bidding model has decimated not-for-profit home care providers. In fact, it was only after massive community opposition to the loss of two long-time not-for-profit care agencies in Hamilton that the Minister of Health finally halted the process.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing and end this competitive bidding in home care once and for all?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say I'm not prepared to do that. Coincidentally, a few moments ago I was talking to the Minister of Finance here about the growing cost of health care. Health care now consumes about one half of program spending; I guess it's close to \$40 billion. One of the things we need to do is find a way to help manage those costs, and the competitive bidding process is one way for us to do that.

Notwithstanding the process that the member criticizes, we have 93,000 more Ontarians who are now receiving home care, over the last two years alone. We also have a \$700-million aging-at-home strategy that we want to begin to put in place to continue to build on health services offered in the home.

So the member opposite's heart is in the right place, but we have a responsibility to pay some attention to some of the costs associated with the delivery of health care at the beginning of the 21st century. We think the competitive bidding process is an important aspect of helping us to manage those costs.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is for my good friend the Minister of Transportation. The good people of Ontario, especially those in my riding of Peterborough, are concerned with the increasing congestion on our roads, as well as with the safety and upkeep of Ontario's roads and bridges infrastructure, so long neglected by previous governments. As we all know, the government has been proactive in tackling this infrastructure deficit with funding programs such as COMRIF and, most recently, the MIII program.

Can the Minister of Transportation please provide me and my constituents with what his ministry has done for the good citizens of the riding of Peterborough?

Hon. James J. Bradley: A very good question. He's been working hard on behalf of his constituents. I think congestion is a problem faced by most municipalities.

Our budget this week announced a roads and bridges infrastructure fund of \$400 million. This fund will benefit each municipality across the province. I'm sure the member for Peterborough was pleased to share with his municipal colleagues and his constituents that the city of Peterborough and Peterborough county received more than \$4 million. The purpose of the funding is for repair of municipal roads and bridges.

But funding to roads and bridges is not enough to combat the growing problem of congestion on our roads. That is why our government initiated the gasoline tax-sharing program, which has ensured long-term, sustainable funding to municipalities for public transit. This year alone, the city of Peterborough received over \$1.4 million. That's \$5 million over the past four years. They're going to get 50 new, fully accessible transit buses.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much. I'd like to again address the Minister of Transportation. There's been a lot of talk lately, as there was in the most recent federal budget, of a commuter rail link between Toronto and Peterborough. Since being elected to this House in 2003, I've been advocating on behalf of my great constituents for a GO link from Peterborough to Bowmanville, which is the eastern extension of the GO train line. This is a public transit initiative that will make the lives of Peterborough residents much easier, as they can more readily access the greater Toronto area on their daily commute to work or for pleasure, as well as help to decrease congestion and allow people to leave their cars at home.

Minister, I ask you this afternoon: Could you please update this House on where this currently stands?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm happy to update the member, and I want to acknowledge his persistence over the years. I'm pleased to say that just this morning the Premier and the Prime Minister jointly announced three important initiatives to help support Ontario communities—the Premier and the Prime Minister.

One of these initiatives is the public transit capital trust, which expands on existing federal funding to provide an additional \$195 million of support for public transit in Ontario. This partnership with the federal government will allow us to go forward with important public transit improvements.

The member for Peterborough will be happy to know that it includes funding to help launch a regular GO bus service to Peterborough. It also includes funding for a joint study which will take a look at the possibility of a commuter rail line to Peterborough from Toronto. Speaker, I'm sure you'll agree that this is an important study and that these studies are important for matters of this kind—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Spending announced in this year's budget is a 64% increase compared to spending just seven years ago. That's a faster increase than any other province in Confederation. On top of that, business taxes remain the highest in the country.

A healthy and booming economy might be able to bear the brunt of tax-and-spend policies, but during economic downturns like the one we see on the horizon or the one that we're already in, high tax rates and big spending programs are economic suicide. This is a fundamental tenet of the Keynesian counter-cyclical economic theory that made Ontario an economic powerhouse, and that when ignored, results in disaster. We experienced this first-hand in 1991, when consecutive NDP budgets exacerbated and extended the recession. Minister, do you recognize that history is repeating itself? Why are you scheduling Ontario for another long recession?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government has cautiously and prudently invested in the things that Ontario families need and value: a good health care system and an education system that we can all be proud of, with more students graduating from high school and more students accessing post-secondary education than ever before.

This government, in doing that, has also balanced the budget three years in a row. We inherited a huge deficit of \$5.6 billion. I'll point out to the member that every year that expenditures have increased on those things that families have asked this government to do, our revenues have increased more. That's why we have been able to pay down debt.

Our five-point plan is the right plan for challenging times. We continue to put the interests of families ahead of distant economic theory, and we'll continue to balance the budget in a responsible fashion.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Minister, I think you know where Ontario is headed. The minister likes to present his budget as balanced, but there's nothing balanced about the huge spending on one hand and paltry tax cuts on the other.

I hold in my hand the 1991 Ontario budget. As Ontario braced for recession, the NDP budget promised expensive skills training programs for workers, an increase in targeted corporate welfare and no incentives for new investment. Anyone who reads this document will feel an eerie sense of déjà vu. The only difference is that this government will spend more than double—more than double—what was spent in 1991. Minister, why do you ignore the lessons of the past, why do you ignore the gloomy predictions of economists and why do you ignore the economic realities of our present-day economy?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We continue to invest in the things that are of value to Ontarians. Those values include health care and education. We do it, sir, in a responsible fashion, recognizing that we have an obligation to prudently manage the province's affairs.

These are challenging times. The high dollar, the price of oil and the state of the US economy make budgeting more difficult than it has been in the recent past. That being said, we have a balanced, pragmatic response to our reality that sees us reflecting the values that all Ontarians hold: good, high-quality public health care and education within a prudently-managed and responsible provincial budget.

1500

CONSERVATION

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Recently, 180 acres of Eramosa Karst was transferred to the Hamilton Conservation Authority, yet despite being an integral part to the karst ecosystem, the adjacent 80 acres of government-owned land were left unprotected.

Why is the McGuinty government planning to sell the feeder system of 80 acres for development instead of doing what's right: donating it to the Hamilton Conservation Authority to ensure long-term protection of the karst?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Donna H. Cansfield: I apologize. I have laryngitis. I would be very happy—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. Recognizing that she has that, I would give the member an opportunity to stand down that question. Ask a new question and then speak directly to the minister after. Do you have another question that you would be prepared to ask?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yes. Minister Caplan—ORC.

Hon. David Caplan: I don't have laryngitis, so I'm happy to answer the question.

I want to thank the member because I had the opportunity to attend at the Eramosa Karst the dedication and the transfer of the deed over to the conservation authority. It was actually a very cold and rainy day, which was perfect because karst, of course, acts as a natural rain barrel. It's a significant geological feature.

I know that for the scientists and the people on the conservation authority it was quite a day of celebration as we took this significant natural feature and took all the lands they had identified at that time that were required for protection and we put it into the hands of the conservation authority.

No government, I would say, in my memory, has the kind of track record this government does when it comes to protecting vital lands like the Eramosa Karst, like the 1.8-million-acre greenbelt, which, unfortunately, members of your caucus did not see fit to support.

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that the minister understood the context of the question, and I don't know where he's going with attacking the NDP on it. It's beyond my comprehension on that one.

The government likes to talk about protecting our precious water resources, so here's a perfect opportunity to do that. These 80 acres are the ecosystem feeder system for the karst. If you sell it off and put it to development, that ecosystem will be destroyed. The animal life, the natural paths and the escarpment will be ruined forever. The city of Hamilton has also requested that the ecologically important 80 acres feeding the karst be preserved.

Will you do the right thing for the Hamilton environment and announce today that these lands are being transferred to the Hamilton Conservation Authority? This is a must. It will be a crime if this is not done for the preservation of these wonderful lands and caves and animal life in that area. I don't know how you could possibly not do it.

Hon. David Caplan: In fact, I have been to the karst. I have walked the land. I don't know if the member has, but I can tell you that this valuable geological feature, this valuable and natural heritage, has been preserved for future generations to come. In fact, the record of this government is second to none when it comes to protecting these natural features.

Quite recently I had the opportunity, working with the Minister of Natural Resources, to transfer lands in the Lynde Marsh, as we have in the Bruce Trail, as we have in Halton.

Interjection: Rouge Park.

Hon. David Caplan: My friend opposite reminds me of the wonderful dedication of Rouge Park and Hunter park.

This is the legacy of this government. We have taken these valuable lands and put them into permanent protection and preservation. I know I can count on the member to work with us as we move forward in the future to identify future natural and geological—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. My constituents, of course, listened very intently this week as the Minister of Finance presented his budget. As a very rural riding, of course, we want to hear the words "agriculture, farming and rural." Minister, could you tell us what kinds of investments were made in the recent budget in agriculture and in rural Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Thank you to the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who is a very strong rural voice in this government. I think that the budget document does demonstrate that the McGuinty government will continue to invest in rural Ontario. We will invest in our farmers. The budget at the Ministry of

Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has increased. I know that folks across the way don't like to see those dollars go to people who support the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Fifty-six million dollars will be directed to our Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. This is what farmers have told us they need. They need the government to help promote fine-quality Ontario products.

I want to talk about the land transfer tax for farmers. Actually, this is a corporate tax cut for farmers. Any farms that are incorporated and want to transfer the property to a family member will no longer have to pay land transfer taxes for that transaction.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know there certainly has been very positive response to the land transfer tax initiative in my riding. Could you tell me more about some of the things? I know that many of my constituents—we always want more. Could you tell me what else we have in the budget for farmers and for rural Ontario?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think it's important to keep in mind that investments in rural Ontario certainly do benefit farmers and all other rural residents. Our government continues to invest in those measures that will expand access to primary care, like more family health teams. We're going to invest in more personal support care workers in our long-term-care facilities. We also have in this budget \$30 million to expand broadband services and \$30 million for the rural economic development program. In this budget, we have invested \$12.5 million in the Vineland research station—I think a very clear demonstration that the McGuinty government values the role that rural Ontario plays and the fact that agriculture is the second-largest economic driver in the province. The Premier and the Minister of Finance have recognized that. We are prepared to partner with our agriculture and rural partners to continue to keep Ontario growing.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Mississauga-Streetsville, to welcome to the Legislature today two guests who are making their first visit to Queen's Park: Mike Reinders and Paul Wilson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century;"—1873, I believe—"and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message of forgiveness and the avoidance of evil is universal to the human condition: It is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to add my name to it as page Laura comes and takes it from me.

HOME CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: I have the pleasure of introducing a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

1510

DAVID DUNLAP OBSERVATORY

Mr. Reza Moridi: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the David Dunlap Observatory in Richmond Hill is of historical and heritage significance;

"Whereas the land was donated in trust by the Dunlap family to the University of Toronto in 1935, and the pre-Confederation farmhouse is still standing;

"Whereas the observatory, featuring the largest optical telescope in Canada, has been the site of" great "scientific discoveries; it has been a place of learning not only for students of the University of Toronto, but for the general public as well;

"Whereas the observatory has been recently declared by the University of Toronto as 'surplus' to its academic needs, and subject to sale for development;

"Whereas the observatory sits in an incredibly unique and beautiful 180 acres of green space, the largest such space in the town of Richmond Hill, with trees, birds, animals, plants, insects and butterflies in the middle of a rapidly urbanized area;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the protection of this property of such historical, scientific and natural significance" from being used as commercial development.

I present to you today about 200 signatures which were presented to me during the rally held at Queen's Park on January 16.

LORD'S PRAYER

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has been an integral part of our spiritual and parliamentary tradition since it was first established in 1793 under Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena of conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

I affix my name in full support.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from SEIU.

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I fully support this petition and affix my name to it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I'd like to acknowledge the work of Dr. Tom Short from Credit Valley Hospital and some of his patients for signing it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Alexander to carry it for me.

LORD'S PRAYER

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government is proposing to eliminate the Lord's Prayer from its place at the beginning of daily proceedings in the Legislature; and

"Whereas the recitation of the Lord's Prayer has opened the Legislature every day since the 19th century; and

"Whereas the Lord's Prayer's message is one of forgiveness, of providing for those in need of their 'daily bread' and of preserving us from the evils that we may fall into; it is a valuable guide and lesson for a chamber that is too often an arena for conflict; and

"Whereas recognizing the diversity of the people of Ontario should be an inclusive process, not one which excludes traditions such as the Lord's Prayer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to preserve the daily recitation of the Lord's Prayer by the Speaker in the Legislature."

This is signed by hundreds of people from many, many churches in my riding. I affix my signature to it and hand it to page Adam.

HOME CARE

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This petition comes from many people from Oxford, Brant and Elgin counties.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has continued the practice of competitive bidding for home care services; and

"Whereas the competitive bidding process has increased the privatization of Ontario's health care delivery, in direct violation of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, 2004; and

"Whereas competitive bidding for home care services has decreased both the continuity and quality of care available to home care clients; and

"Whereas home care workers do not enjoy the same employment rights, such as successor rights, as all other Ontario workers have, which deprives them of termination rights, seniority rights and the right to move with their work when their employer agency loses a contract;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We call on the government of Ontario:

"(1) to immediately stop the competitive bidding for home care services so home care clients can receive the continuity and quality of care they deserve; and

"(2) to extend successor rights under the Labour Relations Act to home care workers to ensure the home care sector is able to retain a workforce that is responsive to clients' needs."

I support it, and I'm signing it.

ANTI-SMOKING LEGISLATION

Mr. Kuldip Kular: This petition is for children in smoke-free cars to support Bill 11.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children exposed to second-hand smoke are at a higher risk for respiratory illnesses including asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and increased incidences of cancer and heart disease in adulthood; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association supports a ban on smoking in vehicles when children are present, as they have concluded that levels of second-hand smoke can be 23 times more concentrated in a vehicle than in a house because circulation is restricted within a small space; and

"Whereas the Ipsos Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Ontario Tobacco-Free Network indicates that eight in 10 (80%) of Ontarians support 'legislation that would ban smoking in cars and other private vehicles where a child or adolescent under 16 years of age is present'; and

"Whereas Nova Scotia, California, Puerto Rico, and South Australia recently joined several jurisdictions of the United States of America in banning smoking in vehicles carrying children;

"We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to approve Bill 11 and amend the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to ban smoking in vehicles carrying children 16 years of age and under."

I agree with the petitioners. I affix my signature on it and ask George to take it.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas GO Transit:

"—has been plagued with frequent service disruptions, often leading to trip cancellations and stranding passengers at GO stations;

"—has consistently shown poor on-time performance, which declines each year;

"—has blamed many of the disruptions on long-delayed construction projects it has recently undertaken;....

"—fails to provide accurate information when major delays occur;

"—shows little regard for passengers' schedules or concerns; and

"—just approved a fare hike effective March 15, 2008, in spite of consistently poor performance and customer service;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"—to require GO Transit to provide a rebate on fares paid when GO Transit equipment failure, late arrival of equipment, staff shortage or rail congestion results in a cancellation of trains or a delay of more than 20 minutes to final destination;

"—better and more timely notification of transit cancellations, modifications and delays; and

"—more cars added to trains to ease the overcrowding, which causes safety concerns."

I'm pleased to submit this to the House and pleased to add my signature to it while page Adam takes it from me.

1520

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the federal government's employment insurance surplus now stands at \$54 billion; and

"Whereas over 60% of Ontario's unemployed are not eligible for employment insurance because of Ottawa's unfair eligibility rules; and

"Whereas an Ontario worker has to work more weeks to qualify and receives fewer weeks of benefits than other Canadian unemployed workers; and

"Whereas the average Ontario unemployed worker gets \$4,000 less in EI benefits than unemployed workers in other provinces and thus not qualifying for many retraining programs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to press the federal government to reform the employment insurance program and to end the discrimination and unfairness towards Ontario's unemployed workers."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Samuel, who's with me today.

HIGHWAY 35

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines to communities across Ontario and crucial to the growth of Ontario's economy; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has been planning the expansion of Highway 35, and that expansion has been put on hold by the McGuinty government; and

"Whereas Highway 35 provides an important economic link in the overall transportation system—carrying commuter, commercial and high tourist volumes to and from the Kawartha Lakes area and Haliburton; and

"Whereas the final round of public consultation has just been rescheduled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government move swiftly to complete the four-laning of Highway 35 after the completion of the final public consultation."

It's signed by many people from my riding, and I affix my signature.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Charles Sousa: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Western Mississauga Ambulatory Surgery Centre

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the vigorous capital

project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be performed in an off-site facility, thus greatly increasing the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, alleviating wait times for patients, and freeing up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2008-09 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Richard O'Connor for collecting these signatures, and I sign mine as well.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Parkdale-High Park has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Premier concerning affordable housing. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Beaches-East York has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Finance in yesterday's question period concerning the Ontario disability support plan and Ontario Works funding. This matter will be debated at 6 p.m. today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2008 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2008

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2008, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my honour today to have the whole hour. I hope to keep you entertained for that time. Okay, I can see some members cringing already.

Before I start the debate, I'd like to preface my remarks by talking about the people of Ontario and their efforts to try to reach the minister through the standing committee on finance. As the members might know, every January and/or February, the committee on finance travels the province to hear deputations from people around this great province of Ontario, to hear what their hopes and dreams are and what they would like to have found within the four walls of the budget.

Being one of the members of that committee, it was my honour to travel with my colleagues from the Liberal

and Conservative parties to visit many cities. In fact, we visited eight cities over the period of some eight or 10 days of hearings. We listened to 175 deputants; we took more than 100 written deputations from people who could not get on the list. We took all of that information in in order to find out what the people of Ontario hoped and dreamed would be contained within the budget.

I want to state from the outset how impressed I was with the demeanour of the people of Ontario, how impressed I think all of us were, from all three parties, at the very good suggestions they had to make on broad ranges of topics: everything from aboriginal communities to school buses; everything from what we needed in our schools to welfare cases and how much money the government should spend in various jurisdictions.

But the sad reality is that the government members of the committee—who had an obligation, in my view, to report to the Minister of Finance and to try to document and give some life to the statements that were made—rejected every single consideration that was put before them. The government members passed four vacuous, empty, meaningless motions commending the Minister of Finance for the good work that he had done in the past few months since his appointment and nothing else.

I think we missed an opportunity in this Legislature, from the opposition sides, but primarily from the government side, to advise the Minister of Finance of where the budget should be heading; where the 175 people we chose to speak to us wanted us to go. All of that was missing.

So when the Minister of Finance stood in his place a few days ago and spoke about what he wanted to do, he did so without knowing what the 175 deputants who were chosen by this Legislature had to say. He did all of his statement without knowing, in fact, what the people of Ontario actually wanted. In my view, this was a disservice to the finance minister, it was a disservice to this Legislature and it was a disservice to the people of Ontario.

It is our opinion that the finance committee has an obligation to pass this information on in the best and most thoughtful recommendations it could make. I am stating this for the record here today in the very real hope that when and if the finance committee is again struck for next year, in anticipation of next year's budget—which, in all likelihood, given the financial circumstances that this province and the western hemisphere is finding itself in these days—that the finance committee will take its job seriously; that the government members will take their job seriously; that they will listen to the people of Ontario and that they will give the finance minister, whoever that finance minister might be, the benefit of the considerable wisdom of the people of this province. Without that wisdom that is ingrained in some 13 million people, how is it to be transferred and how is it to be reflected in the document which we are debating here today?

I do have to state for the record that the government motions were four, they were vacuous and they contained

no real information. I would ask that the members of this House commend the Conservatives for their dissenting report. I would like to say that although I do not agree with everything they put in that report, because I am philosophically opposed to some of the things they stood for, the dissenting report did try to capture—as much as they could, and in the terms that they believed—what some of the deputants had put forward.

I would also like to commend myself for putting in a dissenting report as well.

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Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you.

What we tried to do in our report was talk to those 175 people and try to give voice to some of the things they had to say: talk to the people from the aboriginal community who are looking for fairness; talk to the people on Ontario Works and ODSP who were seeking some kind of meaningful increase in the payments in their all-too-miserable lives. We tried to give some kind of weight, and I would hope that even if you, as five government members, have to follow what you are told to vote on, you will file your own dissenting report and put in what you honestly think the people of Ontario want to say to us. Quite frankly, I found the whole thing almost as frustrating, or even more frustrating, than listening to what the Minister of Finance had to say when he presented his budget, not having one shred of information from the people of this province. Next year, I hope the members will be far more amenable to the people of the province of Ontario.

On to my main remarks: There's a big crisis. We've been talking about that crisis in this House since we resumed after the Christmas break a couple of weeks ago. The big crisis in this province has to do with the number of jobs that are being lost. I listened to the government side, and they said, "We've created bazillions of jobs." I suppose jobs have been created; I know they have. I know they've been created in the finance sector. I know they have been created in some of the service sectors. Some of those jobs pay the same, and some of them pay less. But where we are losing our jobs is in our competitive advantage that Ontario has had since Confederation, in the field of manufacturing and in the field of resource industries, particularly as it relates to forestry.

During last fall's election campaign, and continuing through the winter and spring, we in our party have been clear about the jobs crisis in manufacturing and the resource sectors. We believe it's the number one challenge facing this Legislature. Since June 2004, nearly 200,000 good-paying manufacturing sector jobs have disappeared in this province. That number does not include the almost 10,000 people who have lost their jobs in the forestry sector. To put this all into perspective, since 2003, when the people of Ontario decided to throw out one government in favour of another and the McGuinty Liberals started to occupy that side of this Legislature, Ontario has lost 18% of its high-paying

manufacturing jobs, which is the equivalent of about \$6.6 billion in wages that are no longer in the economy of Ontario.

As scary as that number might sound—18% of all manufacturing jobs—I ask members in the House to think about who has been most affected. If you live in Toronto and jobs are lost—this is a very big city with a lot of opportunities. A job lost one day—you might be able to find one in a reasonable or short period of time. But if you go to places like Hamilton, where 30% of the manufacturing jobs have been lost, you will find that that town, that city, is suffering and that the people who live there are suffering and there are not the resources and the banks and the big companies that a place like Toronto might have for people to look elsewhere. If you go to Windsor, it is even more savage and more brutal: 40% of the population who had manufacturing jobs have seen them flee. Unfortunately, Windsor has the dubious distinction of having the second-highest unemployment rate of any city in this country today.

Under Dalton McGuinty's watch, 10,000 forestry sector jobs, worth \$869 million to the Ontario economy, have been lost. Whole towns in northern Ontario have been shut down. Ontario manufacturing employment stood at 913,000 people in February 2008, and as I said earlier, that's a loss of some 200,000 jobs since July 2004, or about 18% in total. Who has been hurt? I remember in the last Legislature, sitting here on the opposition side, listening over and over and over again to government members, particularly ministers, standing up and talking about the auto sector: how we were number one, how all the jobs were here in the auto sector, how Oshawa was booming, how Windsor was booming, how St. Thomas was booming, how Ontario was now the new place of auto building in the world. I have to say that as you look down that list of manufacturing jobs that have been torn out of the heart of this province, you will note that auto—particularly parts and assembly—steel and, need I say, forest products are at the top of those lists.

Statistics Canada has found that when a worker loses a job in manufacturing, he or she usually loses a job in the \$20 to \$21 range, because that's what manufacturing jobs pay. If they are lucky enough to find another job, it is generally at lesser amounts, because manufacturing tends to be at a higher rate. Manufacturing jobs are the good ones.

For the past four years, the NDP has been sounding the alarm over this crisis in our manufacturing and resource communities and putting forward what we think are constructive policies. Even though I am in opposition, I do not take it as my job to be critical of every single thing a government does. We try as best we can to offer constructive suggestions on what might be done to alleviate the concerns of the people of Ontario.

We have tried, with constructive concerns, to put forward solutions such as the jobs protection commissioner, only to be laughed down or shouted down every time we talk about it. It has been successful in other provinces where it's been tried. It has been able to

bring together companies and unions and companies and workers in order to try to save manufacturing jobs before they are forever lost. It is an idea that may work, it is an idea that should be explored, but it is not an idea that has ever made the lexicon of the government members opposite.

We have talked about an industrial hydro rate, to no avail. We have shown that in countries and in places that have an industrial hydro rate, you can actually protect and save jobs. If you look at Germany, they have two rates. They have a rate for consumers and ordinary people in their homes and then they have an industrial rate which is significantly lower, because the German government understands that in order to protect the jobs and make sure that people have meaningful work to do, you have to protect the industry. And if they have to do so by charging a higher rate for individuals, who can choose to turn off the lights—as many of us are going to do this coming weekend—and companies which cannot choose to turn off the lights, other than to put people out of work, they will choose the lower rate for companies. We have suggested that the government look at this, but again, to no avail.

We have talked about tougher plant closure legislation, so that when a company merely decides, even though they may be making a profit, that it's cheaper to go and move holus-bolus to another jurisdiction where the work is cheaper or whatever reason they have, it might be just a little more difficult to do that.

I go back even to the time of my youth. I want to talk about this for a minute, because this has been an idea that I have put forward for a long, long time. I had a job, when I was a very young man with no grey hair at all, back in the 1960s—I worked in a place called Dunlop's. It was on Queen Street, in the east end of the city, between Broadview and Pape. It manufactured industrial rubber goods, mostly conveyor belts and other industrial uses of rubber. There were hundreds and hundreds of people who worked there. One day they just came in, after Dunlop combined with Pirelli, and announced they were going to shut the plant down, and hundreds and hundreds of people lost their jobs as a result.

What was shocking to me was that that company, even way back then, when it was shut down, was making a profit, and there was no commissioner and there was no government and there was no one to help to try to save the jobs; and many of the men—particularly the men, but some of the women—who were forced out of a job after a lifetime of service found it very difficult. Some of those men with whom I worked committed suicide. There were some whose families were devastated, who lost their homes. There were a few of the younger ones who were lucky enough to find other work and went on to do good things, but there were so many of them for whom that workplace had been their life, who were shut down, shut out and made completely redundant.

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I look about closure and I think back to those days, and what was visited upon that place on Queen Street is

being visited in many, many little towns and in many communities across this province. The devastation that is happening to those workers I am sure is the same devastation that I witnessed some 40 years ago, and we have not done anything as a province to it try to protect jobs.

I understand when a company goes bankrupt, I understand when it's not making a profit, I understand that some things cannot continue to exist, but we need some kind of legislation that would force—even if it's just a jobs commissioner who would go in there and say that if the company is making a profit and if there is meaningful work to be done, there has to be a darn good reason to shut down a community and to shut down workers. I wish something like that had found its way into this budget. But obviously there's not; the McGuinty government, this government, has rejected all of the ideas that were put forward.

More recently we put forward other ideas that we think would help this economy. We talked about a manufacturing investment tax credit, and this is not a novel or unique idea; this is an idea that has taken place. They have it in Saskatchewan, they have it in Manitoba, and since just recently they have it also in the province of Quebec. You target manufacturing industries and give them a tax credit, which is akin to helping them to pay for goods and services and even workers' wages when times are tough. Even when they're not making a profit, they can get this tax credit. We think it's a very reasonable idea. We look to other jurisdictions, particularly Manitoba, which has not suffered the same rate of decline in the manufacturing sector—in fact, it suffered no decline at all—while we here in Ontario have seen 200,000 jobs lost. We still put forward this idea, but we don't see it anywhere the budget.

We talk about an aggressive Buy Ontario. I remember, even years ago, there was a Buy Canadian policy. Governments went right out there and said, "Let's protect our work and let's protect our workers." We all understand that if we don't buy from our friends and neighbours—if you don't buy the car that's made in Oshawa but choose to buy the one made in South Korea—that's going to have some devastating impact in our community. The people who work here need to pay their mortgage, need to buy food, need to be part of the community, and we have an obligation to all of them to try to do what is right. We think there should be an aggressive Buy Ontario program for all transit vehicles: 50% of the contract value.

This is not a revolutionary idea of the NDP. This is an idea that is used literally throughout the world. Countries like Germany have it. Countries like the United States have it. Countries like Mexico have it. Quebec instituted a similar policy just last week. We think it's a good idea, but the government doesn't want to listen. I think the government didn't hear it because the government wasn't aware that these suggestions were made by the citizens of Ontario before the finance committee.

We talk about an immediate investment of \$350 million in federal labour adjustment funds in vulnerable communities. What the government did come forward—I think with a little skulduggery, if I can use that word, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. David Caplan: I don't think that's parliamentary.

Mr. Michael Prue: I didn't hear that there was an objection. I think it is parliamentary, having once sat in the chair. I don't remember that word ever being unparliamentary.

Mr. Peter Kormos: If calling a member a chippy isn't unparliamentary, how could that be?

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm not going to use that word, Mr. Speaker, but I would thank my friend for his suggestions.

We think the \$350 million in federal labour money should be spent in vulnerable communities. We do acknowledge that this government has chosen to spend some of that in retraining. Our program has been endorsed by economists, labour leaders and even business leaders. However, it has not been adopted by the minister.

My colleague Mr. Bisson had a private member's bill last week. That private member's bill was endorsed by the Toronto Star, the CAW, the transit industry, but was defeated by this government. Apparently they think that buying that 50%-Canadian-content figure accepted as a minimum by experts in the field was far too ambitious, and they seemed to be worried about exports.

I've only got an hour, so I want to go on to some of the other aspects here of the budget for which I feel very badly when I see what happened in the budget.

We had, I think, seven or eight various groups come before the finance committee and talk about the very sad state of affairs in our homes for the elderly. They came and talked about needing 3.5 hours of hands-on care. They talked about needing nurses. They talked about the level of care of loved ones who were often left to sit in soiled incontinence products. They talked about wanting the government to do something meaningful and fast and large in this regard.

When the budget came down, I listened intently to what the Minister of Finance had to say in this regard. I listened intently because for the few weeks leading up to that, we heard the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care opine about the situation and his own offer to wear incontinence products. It was a very sad statement for him to have made. I understand he has apologized, at least in some respects, in that regard.

But the very sad reality is that this is a government that promised a revolution in long-term care. They promised \$6,000 in additional monies per person, per institution, in order to make sure that the long-term care was there. In the release of the budget, it's quite clear that that was not there. One need only do the math, one need only look at what is being offered in this budget, to see that the \$6,000 is not there. The 3.5 hours is not there. All of the entreaties that had been made by the people of

the province of Ontario before the finance committee were not listened to at all. There is about five minutes, according to the experts, or six from some of them who are more generous: six additional minutes of long-term care per person in this budget. It's painfully apparent to me that those people who expected great things from this government in this regard can only be disappointed.

We believe in the seniors of this province. We believe that the people who live in these homes are essential, are important to the fabric of our community.

I know all members probably have had a chance to visit loved ones or at least to go into the homes for the aged. When I was a mayor and a councillor in the megacity of Toronto and went into the Metro homes for the aged, I was justifiably proud of how our community dealt with and treated the people who lived there. The people who lived there had adequate care. They had support. They had money. They had programs. But I also have to say that in the last 20 years, the quality of that care has not kept pace with the very real demands of the community.

If you went into the homes 20 years ago, most of the people were competent. They understood what was happening to them. They were able to help in their own welfare. They were able to do their own things. When I go there today, sadly, that is not the case. When you go there today, you will see that about 80% of the people have some form of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, or something that is robbing them of their own human dignity. The people that they have to speak and to act on their behalf are the workers, because very often they don't have family or, even if they do have the family, the family is not present in any meaningful way. They may come once a month or every so often for a visit. Sometimes they don't come at all.

I know that when my own mother-in-law was in one of those homes and suffering from forms of dementia, and as her quality of life slowly declined, it was literally impossible for me to get there all the time that I wished I could have, or for my wife to get there as well. We had to rely on the people in those homes to do what we could not do: to make sure that she ate, to make sure that she took the pills that were necessary, to come and bring some happiness into her life, to sing some songs—even the minister from the United Church who came on Sunday to deliver a sermon, which I think not that many people probably even understood, went there dutifully each and every Sunday to present that so that the women who were in that home for the aged could feel they were part of the community. They could sing some songs when Christmas came; they could sing the carols. I know my own mother-in-law used to love to go to that. I was told by the minister that she was particularly active when it came to singing the old songs.

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That kind of care is even more important today than it was 20 years ago. And if 20 years ago we gave 2.25 hours to people who were not incontinent, to people who were not suffering from Alzheimer's disease, then I

would suggest that the minister stating that it's up to 2.7 now or 2.8, or whatever figure he used, is simply not good enough.

There are other health care priorities that are missing in this budget. We proposed a number of practical measures to the finance committee that we wanted to be implemented in the 2008-09 budget. All were voted down by the Liberal majority on the committee and all of them were missing in the budget. We asked for important things like funding for community health centres. We think that community health centres are the way to actually save the government money because you won't have to put the money into more expensive hospitals and emergency care facilities.

We asked that money be put into aboriginal health centres because the worst-health-afflicted people in our province are those of the First Nations. I challenge any members who have ever been in First Nations communities, anyone who has ever travelled especially across isolated northern communities, to tell me that you think that our aboriginal communities, our First Nations people, have the same quality of health care that we expect here in southern Ontario. It simply doesn't exist. We wanted the money to provide publicly funded oral health care such as check-ups, fillings, extractions and emergency care to all of the Ontario children who live in the far north and who are cut out because of distance, because of lack of funds. And none of that was talked to in the budget.

We talked about special funding to a provincial network of CHCs and AHACs in order to ensure that every Ontarian who needs access to primary care can gain access to these services. This would have required 20 new CHCs or AHACs a year over the four-year mandate. None of that is going to be done.

We talked about ending the three-month wait period for OHIP coverage required of newly arrived immigrants. Ontario is the only province in Confederation that makes new immigrants wait three months to get OHIP coverage.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm going to repeat this for the member from Mississauga who doesn't know his history: Ontario is the only province in Canada today that makes new immigrants wait for three months. This government, if you didn't like what past governments have done, could change it. Why are we the only ones left?

I had a gentleman call my office two weeks ago. I'm not going to use his name here in the Legislature because I think he might be uncomfortable with that. He has been married to a wonderful woman—who was not born in this country—for the last three years. It has taken the immigration department a long time to process her papers, but about three months ago, she finally got her landed immigrant status. Then there was a delay of a couple of weeks or months while that was conveyed to the Ontario government, who finally said, "You are going to be eligible for OHIP sometime in about three weeks from now." The sad thing, though, is that she is pregnant and it is a difficult pregnancy that she is

experiencing, and she has a form of diabetes that is impacting or could impact upon the birth.

I phoned and went to the ministry and said, "Can you not make an exception in this case? This woman has lived here for three years. She has paid her taxes here in Ontario for three years. She is a permanent resident of Canada. She is about to give birth to a Canadian citizen who will be born in a hospital in Toronto. There is difficulty with the pregnancy. Her husband is not rich, nor is she. This is potentially going to cost a lot of money if there are difficulties related to the birth. The answer came back: No, they're not going to do that. They're not going to make an exception in her case or any other case.

I was going to tell the man, "Why don't you move to Quebec, or why don't you move to Manitoba, Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland? Why don't you move to Alberta, British Columbia or the Northwest Territories?" Every other province would do something for them, but in this province we don't care about immigrants, in spite of what some government members might say. If we really, truly cared about them, we would treat them on the day of their landing the same as we would treat any person who was born here.

I wish the minister had listened to what we had to say in the finance committee, or that the members of the finance committee reported, because I think some government members might be very comfortable to do that for their communities, especially the communities that have large numbers of immigrants in them. None of that is in the budget, though; not a single thing.

I would like to talk about poverty.

Mr. Speaker, might I ask the clerks—I'm not sure how much time I have, because the clocks are just telling me the time and it hasn't been on since I started.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): You have until about 16:27.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm about halfway through.

I'd like to talk about the anti-poverty strategy. We had, I think, 15 deputations that talked about poverty in Ontario. Some of them had great hope in their eyes. They came into the committee with great hope in their eyes, because in the last election the Liberals talked about developing a poverty strategy and doing away with poverty in Ontario. They came looking for some kind of down payment. They came before our committee and said, "We really need to have something done, and we are looking for a real anti-poverty strategy."

Every third question in the committee was mine; that's the way it works. The government side would get one person to question, the Conservatives would get the second and I would get the third, and we'd rotate. So to every third one of these people who came to talk about poverty I would put the question: "What is it exactly that you're looking for as a poverty strategy? How much money are you looking for in this budget to help alleviate the poverty, particularly of those who are on Ontario disability support? How much are you looking for?" In every single case where that question was asked, it

ranged between 10% and 25%. One said, "As long as it's in double digits, I don't care"—I remember that. All of them were looking for something meaningful in this budget to erase the radical and terrible actions that had taken place under the Harris Tories back in 1990. All of them—particularly people on ODSP—were looking for an opportunity to enjoy the fruits of this province, to live not daily in abysmal poverty but to actually have an opportunity to enjoy some of the benefits of living in Ontario.

In 2003, Dalton McGuinty promised to end the clawback of the national child benefit supplement. That has not been ended. When questions are asked in this House, as I did this week to the minister—"When is this going to be ended?"—there is no talk about ending it, even to this day. We know the government is talking about an Ontario policy, where monies are going to come forward, and I don't say that's a wrong policy. I think that if Ontario wants to implement a system similar to the national system, then good for you. But it is immoral, in my suggestion, for this government to take the money that the federal government gives to our poorest children and claw it back from them. You are clawing back the money. Even your own program is going to give some \$50 to people who are receiving the national child benefit, but you are still going to be clawing back, in 2011, \$72 from our poorest citizens. I don't know why the finance minister wants to continue this.

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It is shameful that people receiving social assistance, both Ontario disability support and Ontario Works, are actually receiving less in provincial benefits, when inflation is taken into account, than they were when the McGuinty government was elected in 2003. I asked a question—I know I'm going to have a late show here tonight—of the finance minister, who claims, somehow magically, that there is a 27% increase. The library was excellent in researching this, and I want to assure the members opposite that that is not the case. I want to assure you that the amounts of money that have been given by this government in its last mandate and in this budget have not even kept up with inflation. The first budget gave 3%; the second budget gave zero; the third budget gave 2%, but it was forward for only half a year, so it resulted in less than 2%; the fourth budget was the same, 2%, but not given till the second half of the year; and this budget is 2%, but not given till the second half of the year. In total, it's less than 8%. Inflation in that same period has been 9%.

I don't know how the government can say, "We are doing good things." There are 230,000 people in the province who are on ODSP—230,000 of them—and 185,000 of those are single persons. I want to underline that: 185,000 of the 230,000 are single persons. There is no supplement or other government program that they can get, as some of the ministers often suggest. So their 7% or 8% increase over the last four years is literally that. They don't have any children or other programs from which they can get money.

These are people who their own doctors say are incapable of working; these are people who the government doctors concur and confirm are incapable of working. We in this House should be ashamed that all we can do is perpetuate their poverty; that we in this House can do nothing except say, "The maximum you can have is \$935 a month," knowing full well that no matter where you live in the province of Ontario, you cannot, in most jurisdictions, even rent a one-bedroom apartment for that sum of money.

In this budget, all of those groups that came before us—every single one of them that was looking for a double-digit increase—have to sit there today, I'm sure, and wonder why the minister did not act upon their request. I want to say it's in part because the finance committee did not send that recommendation to the minister, and the minister in turn saw fit to give 2% only in the second half of the budget, thus saving some \$57 million, according to government figures that I've asked for, by not giving it right away. I'm sure the poorest people in this province could use that \$57 million far better than most of us.

I'd like to talk, again on poverty, about the minimum wage. It's tough out there. It's tough out there when you talk to people who struggle at \$8 an hour—at the end of this month, it's going up to \$8.75 an hour. You talk to them and you ask them what that 75 cents an hour is going to mean to them. They're pretty bright, and most of them can tell you that if they work a 40-hour week, that's about \$30 extra a week. I'm sure every single one of them is going to be very happy to get \$30 more a week. The same way that municipalities are happy to take any crumbs that might be thrown to them, and just as other people who are getting crumbs thrown to them seem to be happy about it, so will they.

But you have to ask yourself: Why does this Legislature condone people who work full-time in Ontario living in poverty? Why do we condone someone who goes out and scrubs floors living in poverty? Why do we condone someone who goes out and delivers handbills having to live in poverty, or someone who does menial work or factory work or any work having to live in poverty?

We believe that that is not something that is sustainable in the long run. We believe that the government should take meaningful action to increase that at a faster rate. Perhaps, had you increased it at any kind of rate in the last Parliament, it may not have been necessary. Had it already been up to \$10.25 by the time you got here this time, it may not have been necessary to do what we are asking you. But you didn't do it then, and we are asking you again: Please increase the minimum wage so that a person working full-time in the province of Ontario is above the poverty line. I don't think that's too much to ask. We think that would necessitate increasing the wages up to \$11, \$11.25, and then hitching that to inflation, so that people would be assured that if they work full-time, they don't have to go to food banks.

The government announced in the budget that they're doubling the support for meals for children at schools and community centres through the student nutrition program. When I read that I thought, "This is great." Having grown up in Regent Park, I remembered the many hungry kids. I was not necessarily one of them myself, but I remember the hungry kids with whom I went to school who were eyeing or looked longingly at an apple I might have, or who saw some of us eating lunch and they themselves had none. I remember that, and it stuck with me my whole life.

I thought, "Here's a nutrition program," and until we did the math, I thought it probably wasn't a bad thing. But if this government is saying they are doing a good thing by way of students and children, then they have to acknowledge that the extra money in the program is about 50 cents per child per week.

I went home last night—I do the shopping in my house—and looked around at what I had bought for 50 cents that I would give to a kid, what a kid could get for 50 cents. It was an orange or an apple or half a stalk of celery, something like that; that's what you would get for it. I'm sure the children would want that, I'm sure the children need it, but I'm not sure it's sufficient. If that is your poverty strategy, then I'm not sure that it is enough.

We moved a number of motions, all of which were defeated, to end the clawback so that families could keep the \$122 that are being clawed back now. We moved to implement a full Ontario child benefit that would provide equal benefits to all low-income families, including those on some forms of social assistance. That was defeated. We moved a motion to introduce a \$10.25 minimum wage effective immediately and to increase—that was defeated.

I don't know what this government's poverty strategy is, but I do know that when those people who came before our committee heard what the finance minister had to say, they must have been hugely disappointed and must have wondered why they were not listened to.

Other things: property tax reform; fair funding for our cities. It was bizarre to listen to the finance minister in the days leading up to the budget, when he hauled in the mayor of Mississauga, the head of AMO and the finance budget chief of the city of Toronto to announce that if there was more than \$600 million at the end of the year, after everything was done, sometime in August there would be money for cities. They were all smiles and were all sitting there thinking, "What a wonderful thing."

When the press asked me at the end, they seemed to be kind of happy with this. I retorted, I think rightly, that these are municipalities across this province, some 480 of them, who would be happy if they got anything. So even if there was a promise or a potential of some money, they would be happy. But you can imagine their frustration and my frustration when the minister stood up to deliver his budget and when, inside the four walls of that budget, there was an acknowledgment that there may be only a \$600-million surplus, that that \$600-million surplus

would go to paying down the debt, and that there may in fact be nothing for the cities.

I think the cities ought not to have been surprised because, a few days before the budget was delivered, this side of the House got a copy of the new bill, the bill that somehow is going to give the money to the cities. Very careful reading showed that the cities were earmarked to get money only in the first year and only if there was money available, and that in the second and subsequent years it went to wherever the Minister of Finance said it would go. Also contained within the body of that bill was the provision that it could be cancelled literally at any time. So it was an attempt to buy the cities. I don't know why the government is not doing what the government promised it would do. If you want to give the economic wherewithal to the engines of economic development of our province, which are the cities, then you should do something meaningful in this budget and every budget to make it happen. The easiest, the best and the fairest system is to end the download.

1610

When the Harris Tories brought in the download, it was devastating to our towns, municipalities and cities across this province. It was absolutely devastating. They will tell you that there's \$3.2 billion in taxes that they collect that go to provincially mandated programs over which they have very little control. They will tell you that if you could take that \$3.2 billion off, there would be monies available for them to do what they need to do to build the infrastructure. They will tell you that there are opportunities for this government to change the tax regime so that cities and towns get the monies they need.

I remember when the federal government reduced the GST from 7% to 6% and from 6% to 5%. When the province asked, "What about cities?" the federal Minister of Finance made a very sensible suggestion. I don't agree with Tories a lot, but it was a sensible suggestion. He said that if the province—any province—if Ontario wanted to boost its provincial sales tax by 1% to offset the reduction and give that money to the cities, they could do so. I know that my leader, Howard Hampton, sent a letter to the Premier, following the last election when that happened, suggesting that the NDP would support him if he unilaterally made that move, that the 1% that was being taken off the GST be added to the PST and earmarked for the municipalities. That could have been done in this budget, but it wasn't. As a result, you have cities and towns running around saying, "Give me money; give me money; show me what you'll give me." They all seem to be happy that in this budget there are monies earmarked for one year for things like transit and bridges and da, da, da. But there is nothing there for the long term.

We know that in the next budget—the figures are already there. The revenues of the province of Ontario have gone up approximately \$5 billion a year since 2003—every year. They've gone up from \$88 billion to \$93 billion to \$98 billion, and they keep going up by about \$4 billion to \$5 billion a year. I ask the members to

look on page 108—I think that’s the page—where it shows that the anticipated revenue for the province of Ontario for next year is going up \$200 million only, that the recession is biting and that the finance ministry officials know there’s not going to be money. So if anything meaningful needs to be done, it needs to be done in a long-term way—not to say that “This year we’re awash and we have several billion dollars and we’re going to throw some out the door and you’re all going to be smiling, municipalities.” And indeed they may all be, but next year they’re not going to be. If the recession lasts longer than I hope—and I hope it doesn’t come at all—then I’m afraid that many people, including our municipalities, will not be smiling quite so much.

The NDP believes in fair property taxes. I noticed with some interest that the Minister of Finance has a new policy for seniors. I’m not going to say that it’s a bad thing to give seniors \$250 a year to stay in their houses. I don’t think it’s going to make that much of a difference to that many seniors. Property taxes average around \$2,500 to \$3,000 per house, depending on the municipality—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Seventy cents a day.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, it’s 70 cents a day. If it’s going to keep you in your house, then, good, I’m glad they get it, but I don’t think it’s likely. I think what is missing here is that our poorest senior citizens don’t own a house. More than half of those who are over 65 years of age in this province do not live in their own home. They rent an apartment. They live in a seniors’ residence. That is where they live. There is nothing in this budget—no \$250 going up to \$500 the year after—for them. I have to question the fairness of that.

I also have to question why this is being done at this time. I’m trying not to be cynical. But I do know that this fall MPAC is going to be sending out letters in the mail. This usually comes out in September, October, November. I’d like to say that the scariest thing in the fall isn’t Halloween; the scariest thing in the fall is when you get your MPAC letter if you own a house, because you open that letter and you see how much they now say it’s worth and consequently you know how much your taxes are going to go up. That’s the scariest thing. I think that what has been done here in this budget, without being cynical, is to shield the seniors who are going to come forward in massive numbers this fall on the four-year cycle when they see the values of their houses going up astronomically. They are going to be told, “Don’t you fret; don’t you worry. You’re getting your \$250.” But I do have to question why seniors who live in apartments, why seniors who live in homes, why they are not eligible for the 70 cents a day, because they, in most cases, are poorer than those who own their homes.

The same question was raised by the apartment owners. I don’t think there was much in their heart trying to protect poor people. I think they were trying to protect themselves. But they did raise the point, and it was a good point to raise, that their tenants won’t be seeing any of that additional money.

The reform of the property tax is coming, and when it comes I don’t know what the government is intending to do. They skilfully and carefully made sure it happened after the election and took it off the agenda as an election item. But the reform of the property tax needs to take place so that we do not live in fear every year, every two years, every four years or however often reassessments take place. We need a model where people buy their property and know what it’s worth and know the taxes they’re going to have to pay. We need a model where the municipalities don’t have to raise approximately 25% of all the monies they raise to pay for provincial programs. We need a model that implements all of the recommendations of the Ombudsman’s report. I’m looking forward, I guess in September, to see—and to marry that with this budget—what the government’s true intent is.

We go on to child care: not one word in the budget about child care. We look at other provinces, particularly Quebec, which has the best child care program in the entire country, bar none. They had it before two weeks ago. They have an even better one now, having committed some \$600 million to child care. That’s not the case in this Legislature. When the minister was asked today to show which page, there is not a page; there was not a line item; there was simply a line saying that we believe in quality child care. I don’t know what that does to the families and the kids in this province that need it.

The Liberals have failed to deliver on their 2003 commitment to invest \$300 million in new provincial money to expand the regulated not-for-profit child care sector. The commitment of \$25 million re-announced in this year’s budget will have little impact on the quality or affordability of child care in this province. We tabled Bill 26 today. It was defeated when all but two members of the government made sure and voted against it. So much for this government’s commitment to quality child care.

In terms of municipal infrastructure, I’ve already spoken about that. I am mindful that I have some seven or eight minutes left, so I’d like to go on to climate change. There’s precious little in this budget about the environment—precious little at all. In the statement from the finance minister, in the 14 pages that he read out, I don’t remember that the environment was mentioned at all.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I’m being told by my colleague—but it must have been a pretty skimpy line, because it went right by me.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The \$56 million—

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay. I’ve been told that there’s a whole \$56 million out of a \$96-billion budget, and the \$56 million is being put forward for some kind of cleanup.

1620

Other provinces have really embraced the idea of Kyoto. Other provinces have really embraced ideas, whether you agree with them or not. You look at British Columbia, which has gone way out on a limb, talking about carbon credits. You look at other provinces like

Quebec, with meaningful plans to address climate change. And the statement in our budget—all the minister could muster was a weak statement that the McGuinty government will work with other provinces and US states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The other provinces are bold. They're exciting, they're coming up with ideas, and they're willing to put some money and some muscle into it—and this government is willing to talk. There is no climate change plan. There are no meaningful programs to address climate change. There is no funding. It's a triple play of negligence.

We need a climate change plan introduced into this House immediately for debate, so we can get on with doing what Ontarians expect of us here—to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in keeping with the Kyoto protocol. If the government does nothing, then you play right into the hands of the federal government, which is bound and determined not to implement Kyoto. I think that we have to be at the forefront. We have to at least match that which is being done in Quebec, British Columbia and other provinces.

This budget confirms that Ontario, if they do nothing, remains at the back of the pack of Canada and around the world when it comes to climate change.

You don't have to listen to me. Listen to what the Environmental Commissioner, Gordon Miller, said in April 2007. He said that the ministries of the environment and natural resources were "starved of funding for core functions" and that "at a time of unprecedented public concern for the health of the planet, Ontarians may find it hard to believe that these two ministries are today struggling with fewer resources than in the early 1990s, but that is unfortunately the case."

Without the resources—and I do not believe that there were adequate ones put in this budget—it will be impossible for us to develop the new regulations on energy efficiency and greenhouse gas caps that are required to address climate change. All we saw was a joint increase of 3.5% for the ministries of the environment and natural resources—not enough to do the job; not enough to provide Ontarians with the environmental protection they want and deserve.

The Environmental Commissioner has shown the drastic underfunding of the ministries of the environment and natural resources, and the increase that is here still falls short of the resources required by the MOE and the MNR to properly protect our environment and our resources.

I think I have some four minutes left. I have spoken about forestry. I had much more, but I'm going to go on.

I want to conclude with our First Nations. It's no secret that there is a strained relationship between the First Nations and the McGuinty government. We had literally a dozen groups come and talk to the finance committee, as we travelled the province, about what we could do to help First Nations. None of it found its way into this budget. The McGuinty government's failure to carry out its duty, to properly consult with First Nations prior to allowing resource development on First Nations

traditional lands, has resulted in KI leaders being in jail. I'm not saying for a minute that the McGuinty government put them there, but the McGuinty government's failure to live up to the constitutional requirements of the province of Ontario, its failure to live up to its duties as a signatory to Treaty 9—Ontario is a signatory, along with the federal government, to Treaty 9 for much of northern Ontario—has resulted in six or seven leaders being in jail today.

It's a very sad day in Ontario when First Nations leaders are forced to protect their own aboriginal rights and traditional lands against mining companies because the government failed to properly consult with them in the first place.

Beyond that, what was there in this budget for First Nations? We know that the children in Attawapiskat are studying in portables. We know that their school is unfit, that there was a diesel spill and that the kids can't go in. I've been in that school. You cannot stand the smell in that school. We know that a new school is needed. We know the federal government is not paying for it. But I think we have an obligation in this province for those students, who are our students, who are Ontario students, to give them the kind of training that they would get in Scarborough or in Mississauga, that they would get in London or in Thunder Bay. We have that obligation, and I would like to see some money there.

I also think there needs to be some money for the NAN, for the policing. Do you remember when a First Nations person died in one of the police stations? You have to remember that they're locked in the police station and they can't get out. It's a jail; they're locked in at night. It did not meet the fire code, and it burned to the ground. That poor man died. That is not a lone station; the police stations in northern communities are all unable to meet the fire code.

The NAN leadership has been down looking for money, and they got brushed off by the minister of this government. They were told, "No money until the federal government commits money." That isn't what they were looking for. They were looking for the Ontario government, the leadership of Mr. McGuinty and the leadership of the new minister, to do something. That leadership was woefully lacking.

If you want to be serious, if you want to indicate to the First Nations community that we are on their side, you can't say that we're going to do it in partnership with the federal government. You have to say that we're going to do it and that we're going to make the first move; that we are serious in this province about our First Nations community; that we are serious that they are Ontario citizens; that we are serious that they have a place in this Confederation.

I believe that one of the ways we can do that is by indicating to them that the \$23 million they need in total to refurbish their police station, to get their recruits, to have adequate policing in our northern communities, is done. In many of our northern communities, what happens is, if there is a domestic dispute at 2 or 3 o'clock

in the morning and they phone for the police, there are no police to come to undertake what's necessary because they only have enough funds to have a police officer during the day. They don't have anybody there at night. Oftentimes the chief or some other person in the community is called upon to show up at 2 or 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning and undertake police activities, things for which they are not trained, to take people to jails—that are not safe for them to be in—to cool off overnight.

I'm indicating from here that my time is almost up. I think that if I could close on anything, it is that this province needs to do as much as is humanly possible to implement a program whereby our First Nations are not shut out of this province, they do not walk away from the table, but they embrace this province for the opportunities that should be available to them. I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your leniency.

Hon. David Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent, related to your earlier announcement on the late show, for the late show requested by the member for Parkdale–High Park to be taken up on Tuesday, April 1, instead of today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Do we have unanimous consent to move the late show to next Tuesday? Agreed? Agreed.

Further debate? The member for Pickering–Scarborough West.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: This is my first opportunity as the newly elected member—actually, Pickering–Scarborough East, but that's pretty close, considering it's the first time up. Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for recognizing me. I'm very pleased to be on my feet today and having an opportunity to speak to the 2008 Ontario budget. I'll be sharing my time today with the member for London–Fanshawe.

I've had the opportunity over the past three days, first to hear the Minister of Finance make the presentation on our budget, and subsequently, during the last two days, to hear from both the official opposition and the third party. After that amount of time, I think it's kind of necessary to come back to what the budget is really about, as opposed to what both the official opposition and the third party would like the budget to be about.

Quite frankly, we've taken our marching orders from the constituents, from the election in the fall of last year. This budget, to a large extent, reflects on where we're going within that mandate. It was only two days ago that Minister Duncan rose to present this budget. It's a significant budget to the people of Ontario and a significant budget to the Liberal Party and our caucus, as the first budget of our renewed mandate, of a second majority McGuinty government.

1630

It's our third consecutive balanced budget presented. As we finish this year, if my math is right, it will actually probably be the fourth year in which the government will end up in a balanced and surplus position. We're

reaching into unprecedented territory with the plans we have ahead.

This budget speaks specifically to the concerns that Ontarians have, whether those Ontarians are laid-off workers wondering how they're going to afford to be retrained for new careers—not just wondering how they are going to find an opportunity to do the same old job they were doing, but real opportunity to prepare for a new economy.

It speaks to low-income families who can't provide dental care for their children, with the beginning of our program for poverty reduction ensuring that those young people and adults have the type of care they need in regard to their dental care.

It speaks to low- and moderate-income senior homeowners who do have concerns about their capacity to meet all of their needs, including their property tax needs, as the valuations on their houses increase, and effectively the resources they have available to them are there but they can't afford to draw on those, or don't want to draw on those, out of their family home.

It speaks to university and college students as they struggle with the high cost of their education, the rising cost of their education.

To each of those, Minister Duncan said that we've heard. We've heard the concerns of Ontarians and we're going to make things better in this province in a strategic and thoughtful manner. To all of them, our government has said that, together, it's our plan to make Ontario a stronger place.

In his budget statement, the minister outlined a few of the challenges that Ontario faces at this point in time. We are all quite familiar with what's happening. The US economy is slowing down at this point. We're all hopeful that it will rebound in a short time frame. But, having said that, it would appear that there will be a period of instability within the American economy.

Oil prices are on the rise. The minister, even in question period, as has the Premier, has referenced the changes that have occurred in only a few short years, with oil now in the area of \$100 a barrel.

We have a higher-than-anticipated Canadian dollar. It wasn't that long ago that people would have said that a Canadian dollar at par for an extended period of time was not something we were likely to see. Now, in effect, that's exactly what happens. We're in the par range, whether it's 98 cents, 99 cents, \$1.01, \$1.02, but it's staying there at this point in time and we have to adjust to that reality as well.

We have to take into account the growth forecasts, and those have been reduced. Our projections are such that we are taking into account that lower growth rate within the economy and still maintaining a prudent approach to budgeting.

We know, in spite of the fact that our economy is resilient, that certain sectors, some communities and, frankly, far too many families are not fully sharing in Ontario's prosperity. Our budget recognizes and acknow-

ledges the needs of these key sectors, these communities, and particularly these families.

The Premier in his comments, as well as the finance minister, has spoken to what is seen as a centrepiece in the budget, and that's the investment of \$1.5 billion over three years in a skills-to-jobs action plan. It's matching the skills of Ontarians with job opportunities. We'll train unemployed workers for new careers, not just the same careers. We're going to expand apprenticeships, build more spaces in the colleges and universities that have been so successful here in the province of Ontario, and assist students with key education costs, whether that's in technology or the hard-copy books they so much depend upon.

Through a \$355-million Second Career strategy, we're going to assist some 20,000 unemployed workers with long-term training that launches them into new, well-paying careers. The government has plans to expand apprenticeship programs, targeting 32,500 new registrations annually—a 25% increase by 2011-12.

Most importantly, our people will be training in areas where growing industries are experiencing a shortage of workers. It's incredibly important to focus the training, not on training people to do jobs that aren't there, but on training people for jobs where there are actually shortages of workers. When tens of thousands of jobs in this province go begging because we don't have people ready and able to take up those challenges, the economy suffers.

Starting this fall, we'll provide a new textbook and technology grant for some 550,000 full-time college and university students. Students from rural and remote areas in this province, who don't necessarily have ready access to our urban environments and our urban colleges and universities, will benefit from a new distance grant to assist them with their travel costs so they can share fully, as do other students, in the opportunities at colleges and universities here in the province of Ontario.

There's a commitment of some \$970 million to go toward building places where students can learn, building places for training in our colleges and in our universities.

It's not only our students, those who are going to drive the economy in the future, for whom we have to have concern. We have to have some special concern for those who have actually created the environment in which we live now: our seniors. Our seniors have contributed so much to this province's success over so many years.

This budget proposes a property tax grant to help low- and moderate-income senior homeowners pay their taxes and stay in their homes. In the early part of next year, the province will provide grants of \$250 to some 550,000 senior homeowners, and the grants would rise to a maximum of \$500 in subsequent years. Over a five-year period, this would amount to almost \$1 billion in savings to seniors across the province. This is in addition to the property and sales tax credit that's already in place for both homeowners and those renting seniors of low and more modest incomes.

Mr. Mike Colle: That's \$625.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: You're right: That amounts to about \$625 a year. When you add that onto the \$250 and then \$500, you can see that low- and moderate-income families will be eligible for up to about \$1,000 to well offset the expectations they have in property tax.

Mr. Jeff Leal: These are grants, right?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: These are direct grants to them.

To help ensure that Ontarians have an opportunity to be at their best, particularly our children, the new cabinet committee is working on a strategy to reduce poverty. In leading that, Minister Matthews has led the charge, in effect, to more effectively begin the process of ensuring that we move children in particular out of poverty so they can share in the bounties of this great province.

Improvements to dental care, to make a difference in the health and well-being of thousands of low-income families: The government is going to provide some \$135 million over the next three years.

To ensure that no student has to start school hungry each day, we'll provide good, well-balanced food to thousands more children by doubling our investment in the student nutrition program over the next three years.

There's help, as well, for those who find themselves unable to be in the workforce for any variety of reasons. There's help for some 690,000 Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program recipients. The government will increase social assistance benefits by 2% in 2008-09. This is in addition to the Ontario child benefit.

The time is short, because many members of the Legislature, many members of our caucus, want the opportunity to speak to this budget and the things it's going to do directly in their communities and for Ontario more broadly.

The budget really is about ensuring that Ontarians have the opportunities that they want and the skills they need to succeed so that, together, we can make this a stronger Ontario.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank my colleague the member from Pickering-Scarborough East, the parliamentary assistant for the Minister of Finance, for his eloquent detailing of the highlights of the budget.

As you know, this budget, when announced a couple of days ago, didn't talk about the details.

I listened to the member from Beaches-East York speak for almost an hour about the elements of the budget. I'm always interested when he speaks, and I listen to him speak about many different subjects and issues, especially today when he was talking about the budget.

1640

I agree with him to a certain extent about certain issues. While I agree that we're not having a good time right now in the province of Ontario or North America, the economic circumstances are changing. There is an economic shift.

We had the chance last year or the year before to meet with the head of the CAW, Buzz Hargrove, when he came to our auto caucus and spoke to us after his visit to China. He told us about how much an engineer in China

makes a year in comparison to an engineer in Ontario. It is a huge gap in salary, and also for an engineer in Mexico and in many other jurisdictions in the world.

Not a long time ago, I was reading in the paper about how a car produced in China would cost about \$5,000. The same, similar-condition car would be produced in India for \$4,500. For the same car, it would cost Ontarians almost \$12,000.

There is a shift in the economy in North America and worldwide. That's why this budget speaks to the future of this province, about a plan for the future of this province by trying as much as possible to maintain the jobs we have by supporting companies, factories and manufacturing jobs across the province to maintain their existence and to keep hiring and maintaining the jobs they have in this great province of Ontario.

Also, we try to attract many other jobs to come and open by providing financial support and giving whatever is necessary in order to get them to come and open in Ontario and hire Ontarians to work in those factories in those jobs. To a certain extent, we are successful in attracting a lot of companies. Great examples are Toyota in St. Thomas, Hanwha in London, Hino in St. Thomas, the Original Cakerie in London, and many other factories and companies trying to open in Ontario. They come to Ontario not only because Ontario has a good location or mass of land, but because Ontario offers other things, like skilled workers, a good health system, a good education system, a safe environment, and a government willing to work with them and give them whatever support they need in order to progress and succeed.

No doubt about it: There is a lot of competition. Not long ago, a barrel of oil was \$60 or \$70; today, it's almost \$112. Not long ago, our dollar was almost 80 cents compared to the American dollar; now, it's almost \$1 or \$1.01.

Not a long time ago, the economy in the United States was performing excellently. As you know, we deal with the Americans, our neighbour to the south, on a daily basis. Basically, our economy is dependent on them in terms of trade, manufacturing, production and many different issues because of the population differences between us and them. We have a population of 13 million; they have a population of 350 million. That is why, if their economy is going down at the present time, there is no doubt about it: It's going to affect our economy. We share a lot of shifts in our economy. When you hear the leaders of the United States talking about job losses by the thousands and hundreds of thousands in some states, there's no doubt about it: It is going to affect us; it is going to affect our economy.

So what do we do? Do we sit on our hands and cry? No. We have to reinvest in the future. That's why this budget speaks a lot about innovation and research. We invest in universities and colleges, invest in communities, because we believe strongly that communities and municipalities are our strong partners. They give us the ability and the strength to carry on for the future.

This budget, despite what my friend from Beaches-East York is saying, paid a lot of attention to the environment. London alone got \$56 million for the cleanup of some polluted sites. This is \$56 million just for London alone, and for infrastructure, almost \$6 million to fix roads and bridges. And we're looking forward tomorrow to another announcement for infrastructure, an announcement to support the city of London to proceed for the future. And there's a lot to come.

London is a great area for education. We have great colleges like Fanshawe College; we have a university like the University of Western Ontario. We are working with those centres to strengthen our economy. We had a chance, with the Minister of Research and Innovation, a couple of weeks ago to meet with Western university to talk about the potential and possibility to bring two sectors together, the university with industry and companies and factories, to work together to enhance their ability, to enhance their research, to enhance their production in order to be able to compete at a national level and an international level. I think this project is the first of its kind and it is unique, because the only way we can compete in the future is when we bring intellectuals and the production facilities together in order to enhance our productivity and our products to give us the chance and ability to compete on a global level.

We in this budget look after our vulnerable people. I know the member opposite spoke a lot about this area, and I share all the concerns, the thoughts and the feelings and passion about this issue. I'm also passionate about it, because I'm one of the people who came a long time ago to this province. I came in 1989. I couldn't speak English back then. I didn't have a job; I didn't have a family. I didn't have any support. So I know how newcomers feel when they come to this province. They need support and they need whatever possible to give them the ability to fit and integrate in this province of Ontario.

I wish we had in this budget a trillion dollars, not just a hundred billion, because we have a lot of things we have to fix; we have a lot of issues we have to deal with. But due to the lack of our ability in terms of financial ability, we have to manage our budget in a careful way. We have to spread it out to cover as many different elements as possible to keep our economy spinning and working. We have to touch on every single aspect of our lives, from the social to health and education and infrastructure and the environment—many different elements. Because it is our responsibility as a government to spend in a way that can give us money back in order to keep spending in the future, we want to invest in order to get back some of the investment: successful investment to give us the ability to reinvest in our economy.

He spoke about health coverage, the three months in order to be eligible to be covered healthwise in the province of Ontario. This is not against the immigrant, to the honourable member who spoke, because many people travel, they go to live in the United States, and when they get sick, they come to Ontario and get treated. And in the meantime, they pay taxes across the border and they

benefit from our health care. It is not against anyone, just—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you, member from London—Fanshawe.

Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I am pleased to respond to the comments and look forward to speaking in just a few moments. But the part of his speech that got my attention quickly was when he talked about how he was going to make an announcement tomorrow. That's incredible, because this is pork-barrelling at its best. The government has allowed the Liberal members to do announcements. They haven't even given us a copy of the communities that are going to receive any money, and you're out here bragging in the House, you are bragging in this Legislature, that you're going to make announcements. None of the opposition members for the New Democratic Party or the Progressive Conservative caucus are allowed to make announcements. We can't even call the MPP liaisons and get a list of where the money is. It's the year-end slush fund at its best. It's no better than last year's sponsor scandal, or whatever we called it—Collegiate or whatever we called it at the time. It is an embarrassment to this House when this sort of thing takes place. There's absolutely no reason that every MPP could not have the opportunity to make announcements in their own ridings, and you stand in this House and brag about the fact that, "Oh, I'm making an announcement tomorrow—another announcement tomorrow." We don't even know where the money is going in our ridings yet, if at all. That's an embarrassment to your party and pork-barrelling at its best. There's no reason that that should happen in this Legislature. All Ontario citizens should be treated equally. We all represent the citizens of our ridings, and we deserve the right to know which money has been delegated to the different ridings. I feel that the government owes us an apology for this kind of conduct. In a time when we have just gone through the Gomery commission and Collegiate and all this garbage, we still have this pork-barrelling taking place in this House.

1650

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask honourable members to just keep the cross-floor banter down to a minimum.

Further questions or comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First, I'd like to address the comment made by the honourable member for London—Fanshawe about the wait for OHIP for new immigrants. This is outrageous. It's an outrageous comment. What this province does is something that no other province does. You heard our honourable member from Beaches—East York delineate this very clearly: Our province does not allow new immigrants to access the OHIP system for three months. That's what they do, and no other province does that. This is anti-immigrant—I'd use a stronger epithet, but I won't. This is an anti-immigrant policy. There are no two ways about it; that's simply the fact. If

other provinces could do it, we should do it, and we should do it morally and ethically.

When I was thinking about this budget—I will have a chance to speak a little later—I was trying to come up with a metaphor to describe what this budget feels like to me, and I could think of no better one than *Oliver Twist*, when he goes, hat in hand, and says, "Please, sir, a little more." This is an *Oliver Twist* budget. "Please, sir, a little more." All of Ontario must feel, the morning after, like *Oliver Twist*. They've had their little tablespoon of gruel, but it's not enough. It's not enough to sustain them. It's not enough to feed them. It's not enough to house them. It's not enough to provide health care for them. It's not enough to provide adequate education for them. It's not enough to provide incentive for industry. It's simply not enough.

This *Oliver Twist* budget, this crumbs-from-the-government-table budget, also has other aspects. The other metaphor—I'll go into it later—is pie: Never pie today, always pie tomorrow, because most of these promises are for an election away.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's really a delight for me to provide a couple of comments on the excellent speeches by my colleagues from Pickering—Scarborough East and London—Fanshawe, because they clearly set out an agenda over the next year—our fiscal plan, our budgetary plan—to make those kinds of key investments. When I'm at Tim Hortons, in the great riding of Peterborough, these are the kinds of things that people talk to me about in Tim Hortons language: making investments in health care, making investments in public education, making investments in skills training to support those great manufacturers we have in our riding. This is a budget that provides, I think, significant support in a whole wide variety of areas.

I understand, when I look across the aisle, that there's a clear philosophical divide between us and the official opposition and between us and the third party. In the fall, there was an opportunity for all three parties to put their ideas for the future of this province on the table and allow the electorate to examine them. We have the responsibility, and have been given the great privilege, of governing the province of Ontario over the next four years.

We've put forward our budget, which I think is a very prudent budget, that makes sense from a fiscal perspective and that will have a lot of positive impact on people in the province of Ontario. One of the things that will be particularly helpful in the riding of Peterborough—we have the DNA Cluster, which is developing leading-edge research in the area of anti-viral vaccines, potentially to produce a vaccine that could be used in a pandemic situation. The announcement we made in our budget to provide a 10-year corporate tax exemption for new industries coming into Ontario to pick up leading-edge research is the kind of driver that will expand our economic base in Ontario. In fact, it's something that I know Jim Flaherty will give us a standing ovation for.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's interesting that this budget is obviously in the eyes of the beholder. I was shocked when I found the statistic that this year's budget represents a 64% increase over the spending of just seven years ago. It's absolutely amazing that this Ontario budget has risen so quickly so fast. The member for London-Fanshawe talked about the comparisons of then and now, what our government faced in eight years, from 1995 to 2003, compared to what they face today. He talked about the US dollar versus the Canadian dollar, and about the robust economy that was playing out in the United States and a number of other issues. Well, I was impressed that at least he recognizes what those issues are. But in the economics of the world economy and in macroeconomics, you play the hand you're dealt. In the hand that you're playing out here in Ontario with this budget, you're going to place Ontario in a very, very precarious situation and we're going to be faced with a slowing down of the economy, a rising of government expenditures and a sharp reduction of government income. That's exactly the same situation that we faced in 1991. I referred to that in my question today to the Minister of Finance. In 1991, the government tried to spend its way out of a recession. The result of that was an absolute disaster. It placed Ontario in a situation where it ran deficits of \$14 billion or \$15 billion a year for four years running. It put Ontario in a situation where we were the last province in the country.

This time we're starting out from the position that we are the last province in this country as far as economic development is concerned. That's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The member for London-Fanshawe or the member from Pickering-Scarborough East—which will it be?

The member for Pickering-Scarborough East has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I want to thank the members from Simcoe North and Parkdale-High Park, as well as Peterborough and Halton, for their comments on the speeches made by myself and the member from London-Fanshawe.

I want to take the little bit of time we have left. I think we have to step outside and ask: So what are the experts, the stakeholders, those who are affected by this budget saying the day after in a variety of ways? Let's listen for a minute to Len Crispino, the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce:

"The provincial government has decided to take a prudent approach. By the elimination of the capital tax, we think it is something that is going to be very positive. The cost allowance will help bring some money back into the pockets of companies."

Kris Barnier, the co-chair of the Ontario Worst Roads Campaign and CAA Ontario:

"This budget clearly shows the Ontario government understands the need for a multi-pronged approach to sustainable transportation."

Doug Reycraft, the president of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario:

"Investing in job creation and municipal infrastructure is a sound investment for Ontario. Investing an additional \$1 billion in municipal infrastructure means more job creation, sustainable, competitive communities and a better quality of life for Ontarians."

Buzz Hargrove, the president of the Canadian Auto Workers:

"The Ontario government's announcement today that it will spend hundreds of millions of dollars on improving transit, roads, bridges, water systems and other projects will not only help rebuild our communities, but also create jobs at a crucial time...."

"Spending more on infrastructure, training, housing and manufacturing is exactly the right way to respond to an economic downturn."

Finally, in the bit of time that's left, Adam Spence, the executive director of the Ontario Association of Food Banks:

"We are welcoming what the provincial government has put forward...."

"What we have are the right steps towards poverty reduction in Ontario...."

"We've seen those first investments made. That's positive...."

"The provincial government is headed in the right direction ... we've seen the dental care program, the 2% increase in social assistance and the student nutrition program."

Visitors

Mr. David Zimmer: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order: I'd like to introduce three guests who are visiting in the Legislature today. They are members of the Service Employees International Union. They are personal service workers—home care workers. They've been here for the day. They've been visiting a number of members to discuss issues that they are keenly interested in. I'd like to introduce them now: Claudia Dacres, Yvonne Greaves and Winsome Smith.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): That's not a point of order, but welcome to your guests.

1700

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. David Caplan: I'd like to rise, pursuant to standing order 55, and give the House the business for next week.

On Monday, the House will be considering the Supply Act.

On Tuesday, day 4 of the budget motion.

Wednesday and Thursday are to be determined.

2008 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2008

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise to speak today on the budget on behalf of our party.

I am going to do something to begin my comments, and I'm going to give the government credit for something. I know we don't always do that in budget speeches, but there was so much debate around PSA testing. I know we've had a private member's bill from Mr. Tascona from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, when he was here. I know Mr. Mauro put a private member's bill through on PSA testing.

I've got to tell you, in our riding of Simcoe North, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Orillia prostate awareness group put on the Ride for Dad each year. They raise tens of thousands of dollars each year. I'm glad it's come forward. I'm glad it's in the budget, and I hope the criteria will encourage many guys to take up this testing. It will, in fact, save lives.

As I said, I think it's worthy of putting on the record. Other than that, I did find the budget a lot like the throne speech. It was very brief and very vague, and it's very hard to track exactly where the money's coming from for a lot of the different programs.

I have really taken an interest this winter—because I work fairly closely with my federal colleague, Bruce Stanton, the MP for Simcoe North—in trying to understand all the different programs that are available to the province of Ontario through the federal government. I think I've got a pretty good handle on exactly how it's being spent. Anyhow, I did want to comment on that today because over the last two or three weeks there's been a lot of bickering.

But now I'm reading this almost-like-a-love-story, this press release that came out from the Prime Minister's office and the Premier's office today, announcing that the province has signed on to three programs today: the community development trust, the public transit capital trust 2008 and, guess what, the police officers' recruitment fund. They've signed on to that as well.

I've got lots to say on that today, because all I've been hearing in the budget speech—I don't know how many times they bashed the federal government in the budget, and they turn around and here's this love story today in this press release from the Prime Minister and the Premier. So it's a bit difficult.

Anyhow, the Building Canada fund: I've heard that \$16 billion over the next five years or 10 years is being spent by the minister of infrastructure renewal. I've tried to find out when they will sign on to Building Canada. I know that a number of provinces and territories have signed on now.

But I'm going to tell you right now: There is \$3.1 billion on the table from the federal government over the next seven years for the province of Ontario. So, if you take the \$3.1 billion and you multiply it by three—provincial, municipal, federal; that's the way the Canada-Ontario infrastructure programs have normally worked since the Rae days when the NDP actually introduced the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program—that's \$9 billion in infrastructure spending over seven years.

I don't know if the government is actually including any of that money in the budget. I suspect that they are, but they're not giving the federal government any credit and they haven't signed on to it yet. I heard the minister say a minute ago that, in fact, Alberta hasn't signed on either. Now, why would we worry what Alberta was doing? We're supposed to be the leaders in Ontario. BC signed on. Quebec signed on. Well, you know what?

Anyhow. Minister, you can do a hit on this if you wish. What I want to know is when the minister is going to sign on the dotted line and take advantage of \$3.1 billion from the federal government. That's what I want to know.

Interjections.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Scott knows because you cut the microphone off on him at ROMA. You didn't give him a fair opportunity to respond.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, you didn't. That was—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Honourable members, we're just going to tone this down a little bit before you end up in the middle of fisticuffs or something.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: When you start bringing out numbers like \$3.1 billion and the government hasn't signed on, you wonder why. All my municipalities are asking me why they're not signing on. That's \$9 billion in infrastructure spending over seven years that we could be taking advantage of.

The community development trust was announced. That was a billion dollars by the federal government for all the municipalities in Canada. My understanding is, it was to help municipalities and jurisdictions that had lost manufacturing jobs.

Now, after all the money that they bragged about under—what was the program called? I've got it right here—the skills upgrading course, anyhow, where they were going to try to educate or retrain 20,000 of the 200,000 people who have lost their jobs. Under the community development trust, there's \$358 million available to the province of Ontario. They signed on to that today. Here's what it says. This is federal money coming into Ontario: "Ontario's \$358-million share of the trust will be used for programs to support improved productivity and competitiveness, technology development and training for affected workers...." So I think some of the money you're using under your skills to jobs action plan is federal money. It's federal money. You didn't give the feds any credit in the budget speech. You said they weren't even a partner, and here you are using \$358 million of that money right here.

I think the public should know these things. I'd like to see the government clarify if I'm all wrong on these numbers, but I don't think I'm too wrong.

Let's talk about TCU—training, colleges and universities. We know that, effective April 1, the provincial government is getting a transfer of \$311 million specifically under the labour market agreement to training, colleges and universities. Is that being used at

the community colleges for retraining? Is this also part of that skills-to-jobs action plan? I bet it is. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if that \$311 million is going there and not to training for apprenticeships and other areas where that money could be spent. It would be interesting to follow and just see exactly where that money has come from.

By the way, I think you should know that that \$311 million is effective this year. There's also a 3% escalator from this point on. Next year, it will be \$311 million plus 3% coming from the federal government. It would really be nice if we could get along with our federal partners the way we got along with the Chrétien government. We worked closely with them until we found out about Gomery, and then we had to disband. We couldn't deal with people like that anymore. We tried our best over here when we were in government.

I also want to talk about another program. I'm really glad the minister is in the House today because I don't understand why—the federal government put \$68 million on the table for a COMRIF top-up. I know municipalities have received the federal share of that because the federal government gave up trying to get the provincial government to sign on the line, to sign on to it, and they gave out \$68 million without any provincial share. For example, the town of Penetanguishene got \$1.2 million for the Robert Street water treatment plant. The next thing they did was call me and ask, "Where's the provincial share?" We haven't signed on to it. That's a top-up of \$68 million on COMRIF, which would have amounted to—if you take the \$68 million, multiply it by three, the three partners, it's close to \$200 million.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You know what? All I'm doing is pointing out the problem, what I'm hearing from my constituents and what I'm hearing from my federal partners, because it seems to be a lopsided argument on that side over there when it comes to federal-provincial relations.

The labour market agreement has also put in \$1.2 billion over the next six years specifically for retraining. I'm told that the Ontario government, under the skills-to-jobs action plan, are putting in \$1.5 billion over three years. My guess is that part of the \$1.5 billion is from the \$1.2 billion that is coming from the federal government. If I'm wrong on that, put it on the record. But you know what? I would really like you to write me a letter, because my federal people are telling me this and you guys aren't making it clear over there.

1710

Again, I applaud anyone who tries to retrain people who are losing their jobs. There's no question about it; 20,000 people—that's great. But you know what? We've lost 200,000 jobs. We've lost 200,000 manufacturing jobs, and 20,000 is 10% of the people you're trying to retrain.

Ms. Laurie Scott: One in 10.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: So you're going to get one in 10. Maybe you can announce that in your riding, London-Fanshawe. However much money your riding's

going to get for that, maybe you can announce that tomorrow as well, because we don't know how much you are going to get. Anyhow, I'm babbling on about that too long, but the reality is that that is a real concern.

Something that is very important to me is the \$156 million for the police officers. That's out of a \$400 million program from the federal government to hire 2,500 new officers. I asked the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services the other day when he was going to sign on, and he bad-mouthed the government: Stockwell Day bumbled this and he fumbled this and he didn't know what he was talking about. And guess what? Guess who signed onto the plan today? Dalton McGuinty signed on, Dalton McGuinty and Stephen Harper. It's a five-year plan, like it was all along.

Now, a five-year plan for 1,000 new police officers in Ontario. Here's the problem: We want 500 of those officers for the Ontario Provincial Police—you promised it prior to the election; 500 officers—and not contract police officers, not the municipal contract officers. The minister would lead you to believe that he hired 1,000 new officers. He didn't. He hired—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You trained 1,000. You paid 35% of the cost of it. It's \$100,000 minimum to put a police officer in a uniform; you paid \$35,000 for each officer. That's what it is. I'm just saying, that's not 100%; that's 35%.

What I'm asking you to do with the Ontario Provincial Police is pay 50% of the \$100,000; pay \$50,000 toward each officer. You can do that if you do 200 police officers a year, and after the end of five years, you've got 1,000 officers and half of them go to the Ontario Provincial Police.

I can tell you right now, I'm going to bring this up over and over again until you hire 1,000 police officers. We did it the last time. In the last Parliament, you had no intention of hiring the officers, but we nagged you so much in the House and at press releases that you finally started doing it. You moved around until you got around 900 of them actually in place by the time the election rolled around.

We're asking you—and we're putting on the record today on behalf of the Ontario Provincial Police that we believe there should be 500 officers put on the streets over the next five years. And then, go directly to the Ontario Provincial Police for programs like the Internet-luring child pornography units, all the specialized units that the OPP have and the resource people to go with them, not municipal contract policing sections.

Another thing I want to talk about: It was really interesting that I had an opportunity to speak today following the comments made by Minister Gerretsen on his Lake Simcoe protection strategy. Really, what it amounted to today was, he named a committee, because he had made the other announcements prior to that.

The reality is that you've got to start working with the federal government on Lake Simcoe. There are two silos happening there. You've got 30 million bucks, \$30 mil-

tion on the table, and there's actually a committee in place, the PROPEL committee, with residents from all around Lake Simcoe recommending to the federal government what projects should get this money. And they're out there working.

So we've got this \$30 million over four years being spent on specific projects that will clean up Lake Simcoe, and yet we have the provincial government over here with no money on the table, but doing a strategy on the lake. I think we've got to get together on this. We shouldn't be playing politics with something like water quality in Lake Simcoe. Let's get this thing together; let's get the two ministers together, Minister Gerretsen and Minister Baird, and find out where we're going with this so we don't have finger-pointing on this thing all the way through the process.

Minister Gerretsen is in a very awkward position. He's the person who brought out the intergovernmental action plan for Simcoe county that said the county of Simcoe would have a 60% increase in population over the next 25 years. The biggest problem with the intergovernmental action plan, Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out to you on a number of occasions and, I believe, to the mayor of Collingwood prior to that, when he was the warden—the negative point of the intergovernmental action plan was added phosphorus to Lake Simcoe. That's what I tried to point out. It's a problem. You can't go ahead with a plan that adds phosphorus to something as important as Lake Simcoe. The conservation authority pointed that out etc. Now, Minister Gerretsen has switched hats. He's over there with the Minister of the Environment, and he's in a very, very difficult position.

Interjection: He shouldn't have done that.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes. He did the Places to Grow legislation and intergovernmental action plan, and it all ends up having a major impact on Lake Simcoe.

On the other hand, I know that Ms. Scott and many of our members in this House who have ridings that abut Lake Simcoe are firmly in favour of trying the very best we can to clean up the lake. But we want to make sure that all the partners are onside and the money is there as well, because according to the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority estimate, it's going to take \$170 million to clean it up—\$170 million. That's an unbelievable amount of money. Even the \$30 million the feds are putting in over four years is—what?—20% or 10%, no, 15% of it. Quite frankly, we need everybody onside; we need the chequebook there—looking forward to having everybody work together on that.

Something that has come up a lot, Mr. Speaker, and I'm pleased that the other day, in your critic's portfolio, you asked the question. I'm getting it more all the time: this whole thing around apprenticeship ratios. What is the problem? I cannot understand why we can't go back to a one-to-one ratio. For every company that has five electricians, they're entitled to up to five apprentices; the same with carpentry and all the other construction trades. Do you know what? It would give a lot of young people a really good opportunity to get that first step in the door,

to get an apprenticeship. We can have all the community colleges across this province training and retraining and doing pre-apprenticeship programs, but if they can't get that first job with an employer, if they can't get someone to let them put their hours in over a five-year period, then they're not going to get their trade.

And what are they doing today? They are heading off to Alberta and BC. I think we've lost, like, 70,000 people who have actually relocated out there because, in a lot of cases, they couldn't get apprenticeships. I myself know some of those kids who have gone out. They just couldn't get jobs here. I think it's really an opportunity here. I'm suggesting this in my comments today, but I believe it's something we can't drop in the House. I think we have to be firm that we'll do our very best to finally make the government see that this is something we have to move forward on.

I'm coming to the end of my time; I have a couple of minutes left, and I just wanted to say a couple of things.

One of the programs you brought out—I mentioned this earlier to the member from Mississauga—was the Celebrate Ontario program. It's all part of the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership program. I liked it. I think OTMP has been a good program over the years. However, the Celebrate Ontario program—what happened this year? They had to have their applications in by February 4. I believe that was Monday or Tuesday of the week.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It was Monday.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Monday, and they had to be in by noon. What happened was that we had a blizzard on the Friday. In my riding, we have something called the Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, and they were really counting on getting money for some of their festivals, because they have to raise all their money by festivals etc. They sent their application out by Priority Post. There was a blizzard over the weekend, and Priority Post did not get it to the Ministry of Tourism by Monday at noon. It came in late Monday or early Tuesday morning, and they were flatly denied any kind of reconsideration. I think we have to fix these kinds of problems. Surely to God, in a country like Canada, when you have a blizzard, there must be some leniency. When I talked to the minister's office, she said, "We had a number of those." You'd think that would identify right there that there was kind of a big problem. Anyhow, if we could do anything with those kinds of bureaucratic programs, let's fix those things so that organizations like Wye Marsh can get a fair chance to qualify for that sort of money.

1720

In closing, of course I won't be supporting this budget; that is the first thing. I just don't see where the money is being spent wisely. For a 64% increase in spending, I believe that we're not getting value for those kinds of dollars, value for their money.

But I did want to say that this weekend, if anybody is available, we have the Sweetwater Festival on at Wye Marsh without any funding. We're going ahead anyway. If you want to come out, I will be cooking pancakes on

both Saturday and Sunday morning. You're all welcome. I'll make sure that you get a good batch of pancakes. Come out and enjoy yourselves and we'll raise some money for the Wye Marsh.

I appreciate this opportunity and look forward to the comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you to the member for Simcoe North for his contribution to the debate.

Questions or comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to respond to such passion. Unfortunately, I won't be able to partake of your pancakes, but thank you for standing up for your constituents here.

Again, this is an *Oliver Twist* budget that offers very little and puts all Ontarians in the position of "Just a little bit more, please." But this is a government generally of, "Why act when you can talk? Why act when you can have a photo op? Why act when you can have a website or a phone line? Why make a difference in people's lives?"

There's a great quote from Hugh Mackenzie of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He says, "Beyond the end-of-year, one-time only investments in infrastructure, budget 2008 spreads a relatively small amount of funding among a very large number of scattered programs. These announcements will form the basis for news release after news release, but taken together will make very little difference to the real public investment issues facing the province." That's an economist speaking there. He goes on to say, "And most notably for a government that made poverty reduction a key component ... the poorest Ontarians are in a worse position, relative to inflation, today than they were at the end of eight years of sustained attack from the Harris/Eves Conservatives." So there we are; that's what an economist has to say about this budget.

I do agree with the honourable member as well. Another metaphor for you: It's a little bit like swimming through Jell-O, trying to understand this budget, trying to figure out where the money is going, where it's coming from, where it's spent and when it's spent, because so many of the expenses, again, are spread out over years, years beyond this government's mandate, like *Move 2020*. You have to be elected not once, not twice—re-elected—but three times to actually bring into play the money promised.

Again, I look forward to speaking more in depth. I admire the member's passion, and I thank you again for sharing your thoughts.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's always a pleasure to provide comments to remarks made by my colleague and, if I may say, my friend from Simcoe North.

I want to start out by agreeing with a point that he made. The member for Simcoe North talked about a measure in the budget that he liked, which was the funding of PSA tests through OHIP. I must say, this is one for the guys. This is one that is important for all of us.

I'd like to talk about why that's so significant. The member for Simcoe North and I and many of us, if not most of us, here in this House are members of the baby boom generation, and we are the largest demographic bulge that has ever existed in North American history. For those of us born in that leading edge around the year 1946 and onwards, that leading edge is now into their 60s, and the trailing edge born in the mid-1960s are in their 40s. So all of us baby boomers are now between the ages of 42 and 62. For every senior alive today, by the time we baby boomers hit our peak senior years there will be two, and for every senior alive today, by the time we baby boomers become octogenarians, there will be three.

The message that this budget sends and that the member for Simcoe North underlines is that our demands on the health care system haven't even begun yet. We have got to invest now. We need to build the structures that that baby boom generation that we have all been so proudly a part of are all going to need. We need to make those decisions now. We need to be building today, and that's what this budget does and does so effectively. That type of building of health care infrastructure is not something we can do with a tax cut.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Simcoe North's articulate assessment of the budget that we had, pointing out the challenges that face particularly his riding. He's a great constituency person and brings forward some very vital points.

He talked about Lake Simcoe and the announcement from the Minister of the Environment today, and the history that he brings with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, when the Minister of the Environment today was the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I have a small portion of Lake Simcoe. We share that with many members in the Legislature. Collectively, he said it right: We all have to work together to clean up Lake Simcoe. We're pleased with the announcement today, but what does it really mean? That's what we're going to be asking in probing questions in the future on that.

He has been a great member in bringing forward the concerns of the Ontario Provincial Police and he says he's not going to let up on that. He also highlighted the fact that the federal government has come forward and the provincial government. Last week they wouldn't sign on but this week they did sign on—similar to the train story that we brought forward from the Peterborough-to-Toronto commuter. There was no answer last week but this week we have some sort of answer; maybe not the perfect answer we want, but the Minister of Transportation actually did hear about it this week, where last week he hadn't heard about it.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm sure the member from Peterborough is very supportive.

So the Minister of Transportation now is up to speed, we hope, but not quite train speed. We hear it's just bus speed.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We're all on board.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We're hoping that the train comes on and the members can get on board with that.

In the short time left, the member from Simcoe North makes a good point on apprenticeships. He was a plumber as a trade before he came here. He still is. There are some good lines with that but I won't use them. But he brings forward that valid point we all want and that's to see the one-to-one apprenticeship go forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We have room for one more question and/or comment.

Hon. David Caplan: I too want to comment and congratulate the member on his speech. I think he has been a little bit misinformed. He indicates that the town of Penetanguishene accessed federal dollars. My question is, because COMRIF is an application-based program, when did they apply? How is their application evaluated? I know that a lot of municipalities were very interested and that's why we worked, as we have been, with the association of municipalities, urging the federal government to have a fourth intake so that all municipalities would have a fair opportunity to access those dollars. Perhaps the member can indicate to this House how the town of Penetanguishene was able to do that while other municipalities apparently were not.

The member also talked about the Building Canada fund, and I'm glad he raised that because we're very eager to access federal dollars. His math is quite wrong and I want to correct him in his assertion that there's \$9.3 billion. That's a ridiculous figure because that's completely unrealistic. But he should know, as I told the delegates at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association, that that agreement has been sitting on the desk of the federal minister now for eight weeks. Ontario has sent back its draft, its version, and the federal government refuses to sign an agreement. I think the member could be helpful in urging his federal colleagues to get on with the job, to stop dragging their feet, to make sure that Ontario receives its fair share of federal dollars which go to our local municipalities. We think that certain elements are wrong. We don't understand why the federal government, for example, is carving out of Ontario's share \$276 million for "federal administration." What is federal administration? Why so much money? Why from Ontario's share and not other provinces? This member, I think, has good relations with his federal colleagues who could answer some of those questions for us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the members from Parkdale-High Park, Mississauga-Streetsville, Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal for their comments. I want to congratulate my colleague from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for the fact that her private member's bill got introduced last week as a government bill. I thought that was very positive. It should save emissions from trucks, it should save fuel, and hopefully it will save a lot of lives as well. I want to compliment you on bringing

the bill forward and the minister for highjacking your bill. That's great. It was good of him.

1730

To the Minister of Public Infrastructure Renewal, there's a lot of finger pointing going on.

Last week, I asked the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services about the \$156 million for police officers, and it was the worst thing that he'd ever heard of. Everything was wrong about that program that could possibly be, according to him. He turned around this week and signed on the dotted line, because the deadline was March 31.

My contacts in the federal government—I went to the federal caucus meeting up in Deerpark; they invited a few of us up—tell me there's \$3.1 billion and it's being held up by your office. So I'm going to tell you—

Hon. David Caplan: Why don't they sign it?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, I will bring that up again, I'm quite sure, Minister.

But I will be back here next week with a response under the supply bill asking about the \$3.1 billion. It amounts to \$9.3 billion. Somebody's at fault here. It's \$9.3 billion in infrastructure money for the communities in this province, and it's wrong to play politics with it. Let's get that money into these communities so we can build schools and hospitals and roads and bridges, sewer plants etc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a privilege and an honour to rise, really, on behalf of the people of Ontario, but in particular, the people of my riding in Parkdale-High Park. I'm thinking, too, today of the Tibetan folk. I have almost 4,000 Tibetans in my riding and many of them are now entering the fourth day of a hunger strike, which is why I'm wearing the chupa, the Tibetan garb, in their honour, and told them that I would.

I'm also, of course, honoured to speak to this budget, which I have characterized as the Oliver Twist budget. It puts all Ontarians in that role of coming and saying, "Please, sir, just a little more." I also used the metaphor, in response to my colleague from Simcoe North, that trying to understand this budget is a little like swimming through Jell-O. So between swimming through Jell-O and Oliver Twist, we'll attempt to unravel what this government has put before Ontarians.

First of all, we heard a minister earlier today get up and talk about this unanimous raving response from everyone in the media. This could not be further from the truth. I just wanted to point out a couple of quotes.

First of all, an amusing one from Lorrie Goldstein. He said: "Holy David Suzuki, Batman!

"Whatever happened to fighting the greatest threat known to mankind in yesterday's Ontario budget?

"Incredibly, Finance Minister Dwight Duncan didn't mention 'global warming' at all in his 14-page budget speech. 'Climate change' got only one mention in one brief sentence, on page 10."

Christina said: "While McGuinty"—this was before the budget, of course—"was busy showing off the McBuses, back in the Legislature, MPPs were voting on Timmins-James Bay New Democrat Gilles Bisson's private member's bill that would require 50% made-in-Ontario content for new transit vehicles." We know how they voted. They voted down a program that would see 50% of that investment stay in Ontario.

Then we have Michael Shapcott from the Wellesley Institute, who was here today in the members' gallery. He says: "Despite the massive funding and program cuts, and the downloading, the provincial political spin remains formidable. In the year 2004, for instance, the Ontario government issued press releases promising a total of 22,620 new affordable homes. The province's audited financial statement for that year reported a total of 18 new homes actually delivered."

In fact, since that time we put in a freedom-of-information-act request to find out how many truly affordable homes, as of last year, this government has provided, and let us just say—

Hon. David Caplan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Is this the same Michael Shapcott who was the NDP candidate in the last election?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The minister knows that's not a point of order. You're digging into the honourable member's time.

The honourable member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's sadly partisan around here, some days. I have to acknowledge that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: To interrupt.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely.

To continue what I was saying, last year we put in a freedom-of-information-act request to find out how many affordable housing units this government had actually provided. This is, I think, very important and very interesting because it's all, of course, in the spin in the definition of what's truly affordable housing.

In anybody's books—certainly in the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee's books, and I'm sure they're going to accuse them of being partisan. Cathy Crowe, Order of Canada winner; St. Stephen's, who was here: I'm sure they're partisan, including all the homeless people. All the homeless people in Ontario are probably partisan, according to the member opposite.

But despite that, to them what "affordable" means is 30% of their income per month spent on rent. If you are on ODSP, if you are on OW, if you make minimum wage—and remember, we are speaking about 1.2 million people in Ontario who make \$10 an hour or less; we're speaking about hundreds of thousands on ODSP. "Affordable" for them would be a unit that rented around \$500 a month. This is something that is generally agreed upon by housing activists. How many units, we asked, had this government provided last year? The answer is deplorable. It's awful. It's 285 out of 22,620 new, affordable homes promised.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Premier said that 18,000 new—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Today he said "18,000," which I'm delighted to say I'll be taking up with him or one of his staff on Tuesday in the late show.

I want to touch on other aspects of this budget besides housing, which is the most glaring inadequacy of this budget—not one new dollar for affordable housing in this budget, only \$100 million to repair existing housing stock, when Save Our Structures asked for \$300 million for Toronto alone. Instead, we get \$100 million to repair existing housing stock spread across all of Ontario.

If this isn't an Oliver Twist budget, really: "Just a little more sir; just a little more, sir." So they get one third of what they need in Ontario alone just to repair existing housing stock, never mind build anything new, despite 125,000 and growing households waiting, on average, eight to 10 years for new housing.

Then, to move on: small business. I am also the small business critic for the New Democratic Party. Again we get an Oliver Twist response to small business in this budget. Last year I put forward a resolution. It's flattering to know that the government actually read it and decided maybe they should do something about business education taxes that are grossly unfair, particularly to Toronto businesses, so they did something. But of course again another metaphor: the pie in the sky, never the pie now; crumbs from the table. What do they get? They get something happening in the year 2014. My goodness, so we have to elect the Dalton McGuinty government—or perhaps somebody else will be at the helm by then—the Liberal government once again just to see this promise realized. They only accelerate this for businesses in the north, pathetic as it is. So again, hat in hand, small business comes to this government and gets crumbs, becomes again another Oliver Twist figure in light of this budget.

The environment: As I've shared with you, there's nothing in this budget for climate change. Certainly this government's track record on climate change is absolutely abysmal. We get broken promise after broken promise about the closing of the coal-fired plants. Not only that, but to every environmentalist's chagrin we get \$40 billion about to be spent on nuclear reactors. Try to find an environmental group in Ontario that supports the spending of \$40 billion on nuclear reactors. Suffice it to say, again, that if we were to ask Ontarians about this, if we had a referendum on this, no Ontarian would want a nuclear reactor in their backyard either. Again this is the answer to environmentalists' concerns.

No move towards the fulfilling of Kyoto protocols, none whatsoever; instead, a blame game with the federal government, which we know is doing nothing about this, but that's no excuse for Queen's Park to do nothing as well, and they are. They're doing nothing. Even the small gestures around toxic substances are consultative, are bringing it in over a number of years. There's nothing really substantive in this budget at all around energy or the environment, certainly nothing for renewables. We

look at other jurisdictions like Germany, where 30% of their energy comes from wind power. Can we do that? No, of course not. There's no will on this government's behalf at all.

1740

Again another Oliver Twist moment: the dental program that for children works out to \$90 a year per child who needs it. This is an extraction, and they'll need it, because there's not enough in that dental program to actually put in place a preventive dental care program for the poorest children.

Nutrition, again an Oliver Twist moment: a dollar a week for the poorest children. This is pathetic. This is some \$50 a year for the poorest children for nutrition. Meanwhile, one in five children in Ontario lives in poverty. We should be ashamed of that statistic. This government is not responding to that statistic whatsoever.

In education, there's still no fix for the funding formula despite promises going back to the election of 2003, despite promises that they would. We have a few new dollars for environmental education. Hopefully, in those environmental classes they'll be teaching the children of Ontario how little the McGuinty government has done for the environment. That truly will be a moment in education. If they really cared about children in our education system, maybe they should take a little step: Keep all the pools open. All the pools are closing across Toronto. All the parents want is that these pools stay open. It's a small amount of money. If they cared about children's health, about obesity rates, perhaps they should do that.

On a post-secondary education basis: You heard my colleague from Trinity-Spadina speak very eloquently in this House about how little they've done for post-secondary education. Certainly the Canadian Federation of Students makes a note in their response to this budget that \$150 will pay for maybe two textbooks. It's really not going to help students in Ontario, who face some of the highest student debt ever in the country. That's not going to help them. The McGuinty government of course points to more students going to universities. Of course they're going to universities. They can't get any jobs. There are no jobs out there.

We've heard many members in this House speak about the loss of 200,000 good, paying manufacturing jobs. The McGuinty government talks about creating some 400,000 jobs. Even if you buy this figure, which is somewhat suspect, when you look at the jobs they've created, you look at McJobs, you look at call centre jobs. If you actually talk to those workers who have lost their jobs, find out how they're doing. This retraining announcement again is an Oliver Twist moment in this budget. Only 20,000 laid-off workers have access to it, only one in 10. And even for those who do, the maximum seems to be, if you decipher the figures, which are difficult to decipher, just under \$30,000 over two years for a laid-off worker. Not many workers, particularly in middle age, can afford to keep their families on \$15,000 a year to do any retraining. So I wonder how many will

actually be able to take up this program, and when they do, where will they work? Are you going to ask a 50-something person to retrain, working in construction? Will they go to Alberta, will they go to Manitoba, where there are jobs? Who knows? There's no guarantee of work for them when they finish these retraining systems.

Child care: As we've heard eloquently expressed by our caucus member Andrea Horwath, there's not one dollar for child care, and I did look. The minister in charge of children's services pointed us to page 51 of the budget, and guess what? There's nothing on page 51 of the budget for child care. There's about \$30 million, but it's earmarked for everything for vulnerable people, not just for children. We contrast that, as we have done, with Quebec, which just created 20,000 more new government-paid spaces at \$7 a day in their budget, 20,000 more than they already had—over \$600 million.

We hear about reform to the MPAC system but, as so eloquently expressed by the member from Beaches-East York, when that bill comes in the fall, we'll see how delighted people are about the small Oliver Twist kind of measures with the MPAC system. Our seniors are going to get \$250, as if that's going to help on a many-thousand-dollar bill they're going to receive, at minimum, in the city of Toronto—at minimum. This is pathetic.

Again, for seniors, we see the pathetic response to long-term care: hours of care—about 2.77 by those in the industry's estimates—up a mere five to six minutes a day, for our seniors who have worked so hard, who've paid into this economy and get so very little out of it; putting seniors in that role of Oliver Twist: "Just a little more, sir; just a little more."

Community health centres—oh, well, maybe in 2011 or 2012, maybe an election away we'll get something. It's interesting, even the new nurse hires that are there are not promised until maybe the year 2011 or 2012 when this is finally implemented. This is again pie in the sky, never pie now. This is Oliver Twist: "Just a little more, sir." Can't we have those nurses a little sooner? Do we really have to elect the Liberals time and time again just to see the promises of this budget fulfilled?

Again—and I could never do it as well as my colleague from Beaches-East York did, who was of course the mayor of East York—municipalities: Toronto gets shortchanged over \$700 million a year by this government. What do they get? They get these infrastructure announcements. Now, anybody with any political savvy or economic savvy knows about infrastructure announcements. You know, you can say billions of dollars—where do they go, when do they go? Who knows? What the city needs is structural funding on an ongoing annual basis now, not sometime never, not if there's money left over, not crumbs after everybody else has eaten from the budget—not crumbs. They need structured funding. By the looks of the estimate as to what will be left over for the cities, not much. Again, cities come hat in hand like poor little Oliver: "Please, sir, please, just a little bit more."

What about women? Hey, we're only 50% of the population of this province. We've had a celebration recently—more of a mourning—of 20 years of pay equity legislation. Do you know that under this government's watch women still make 71 cents for every dollar that men make? Do you know who one of the major perpetrators of this inequity is? The Ontario government itself, with its own employees.

Certainly, in employment standards, another of my critic areas, we see no action whatsoever in this budget. We don't see action on the minimum wage and, remember, the \$10-an-hour minimum wage campaign was not even on the horizon when I was elected. This was a grassroots campaign of 15,000 people across Ontario who demanded a living wage and have not got it yet. It's not about the dollar figure; it's about a living wage. It's about meeting the poverty line.

If this government was serious about eradicating poverty or the 25-and-5 campaign, the first thing they'd do is raise the minimum wage to a living wage. That would immediately bring 250,000 people out of poverty, and it would also affect 1.2 million people who make \$10 an hour or less. All of a sudden they would affect them. If they really wanted to affect poverty, they'd do more than this pathetic, abysmal 2% raise for those who are disabled who are earning ODSP—2%, when they gave themselves 25%. They managed to do that pretty quickly, but 2%—oh, no, the Oliver Twists on ODSP have to wait till September to get 2%. Now if they wanted to affect poverty rates, they'd immediately raise the ODSP rates at least 31% to get our disabled members of the Ontario public out of poverty. That's a disgrace.

1750

I only have a minute and 38 seconds left, and so much still left to say about the Oliver Twist budget. Suffice it to say I'm not going to be supporting it. Neither should any Ontarian who struggles, and many Ontarians struggle, whether they are working long hours on minimum wage or whether they're collecting ODSP and barely making ends meet.

This morning, I served breakfast in one of the many breakfast programs that exist around the city of Toronto. Who was there at the breakfast program? Well, I can tell you: seniors, new immigrants, children, families, single-headed families. These are the poor, many of them with jobs, who simply can't pay the rent and feed their children.

So, do other jurisdictions do it better? Oh, yes. Had I time, I would outline all of them. My husband and I just came back from Sweden, which managed to build 100,000 units of new housing a year for 10 years in a community of nine million people. How do they do it? Well, certainly I invite anybody who's watching to send me e-mails to find out how. In the meantime, all of Ontario is Oliver Twist when it comes to this pathetic attempt at a budget. All of Ontario is in that position of cap in hand, accepting the crumbs, asking again, over and over, "Is this the best you can do? Please, sir, just a little bit more."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member for Parkdale-High Park for her contribution to the debate.

Questions and/or comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to spend a couple of minutes to talk about our budget. I'm quite shocked by the members from the opposition. They keep on saying that they don't see, they don't see. May I suggest that maybe they should go see an eye doctor.

I had the opportunity to meet with some business leaders in my community with two post-budget breakfasts yesterday morning and this morning. These were people the chamber invited from the farming community and the business community. They were very, very positive in the way we delivered the budget. A farmer this morning congratulated us on how well things are.

To sort of give you some sense of the local newspaper today, the Cobourg Star, I'm just going to read one paragraph from today. It basically says that seniors will get help with property taxes, laid-off workers will get job retraining, that it's very important to maintain hope.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Honourable member, I think it's against the rules to use your BlackBerry to quote from or to use it as a speech prop, so I'd just ask you to refrain from doing that. Carry on.

Mr. Rinaldi: I was unable to get a printed version, but basically the editorial says that all in all it was a good budget, and this from an Osprey publication that's normally not very friendly to this side of the House. So I tell you, Mr. Speaker, they need to look to the budget a little bit closer. There's a lot of good things in the budget. Can we do more? Absolutely.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to respond. First of all, let me congratulate the member on piercingly bringing the government to account for what they are not doing in this province.

The previous speaker, the Liberal member, referred to Osprey publications. I was just on the phone about five minutes ago with Sean Pearce, who is with the York Media Group, and we were talking about this budget. We spoke about the fact that in this budget it's very clear that the Minister of Finance himself has no idea what is happening and what the true picture of the finances of this province is. I pointed out that seven days before he presented the budget in this House, he had as props in the gallery municipal politicians, including Hazel McCallion, and was telling this House that because of legislation that he was tabling seven days before the budget, there would be at minimum \$200 million of additional infrastructure funding for them. Hazel McCallion applauded the minister. And you know what happened? Seven days later, in the minister's budget, he was \$200 million short of being able to trigger the very bonus infrastructure funding that he was promising just seven days before.

I believe that as people in this province become more and more familiar with how this government does

business, they will lose more and more confidence that the affairs of this province are being managed in any competent way. The people of this province are catching up to you, and I'm telling you—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees:—that our time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm very happy to have two minutes to respond in support of what my colleague and friend from Parkdale-High Park said in her effort to exfoliate this malodorous budget, which she has done so, so well.

She talked about housing. Every time you hear a Liberal get up, they talk about the affordable housing they're building. Today, in fact, the Premier stood up and said, on the advice of the former Minister of Housing, no less, "We built 18,000 units," which he claimed were affordable units. The member for Parkdale-High Park said 236 affordable housing units were built. And the Premier stood up and said, on the advice of the man with the great wisdom, the former Minister of Housing, 18,000 units of affordable housing. The Premier stands up and presents it as fact, and all the penguins in this House say, "This is great. This is great." How do you do that shamelessly? How do you do it? They offer \$35 million to repair Toronto community housing buildings that are in total disrepair; \$35 million when people in those buildings are asking for \$300 million as a base of what is needed to repair those buildings. And they proudly stand up say, "Thirty-five million. This is great."

On the poverty agenda, they offer three things: a 2% increase for those on social assistance—this is the great revolution, the poverty agenda, a 2% increase, which nobody is going to reject—and then a picayune little nutrition program, and the other one, the dental program, \$45 million. That's their revolution in poverty. "Yay. Isn't this great?" Shamelessly they stand up and talk about how great this budget is. How do they live with it? I don't know.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's always a pleasure for me to listen to the very articulate words from the member for Parkdale-High Park, but let's get this story straight here. I've been hearing this revisionist version of history. We all know that in 1993, three of their members who were part of the treasury benches back then froze—"Zap, you're frozen"—ODSP rates in the province. That's what they did when they had the treasury benches. It's a fact. And then you roll in the freeze that they brought in in 1993 with the 21% cut from the official opposition, and you wonder why there was a spiral of poverty in the province of Ontario? We were elected to turn that ship around, and we've been doing that consistently over the last four and a half years.

It's too bad I didn't have about eight hours to talk about all of our achievements, because I could fill the eight hours. I was at Tim Hortons the other day in downtown Peterborough, on George Street. Does anybody know where it is, right across from the Holiday Inn?

There were a number of seniors there, because we have a fairly high degree of seniors in the riding of Peterborough. Many of them were veterans of the Second World War, the kind of people who helped to build my community of Peterborough. When I told them that we're bringing in a new property tax grant for seniors of \$250, then ramping it up to \$500, they said that's the stamp of a responsible government of Ontario. Recognizing that we owe our seniors a great debt of gratitude, we recognized that in our budget of March 25. We've enhanced the grant for seniors because those people are still making tremendous contributions to our communities. In fact, I chat with the director of Activity Haven, which is the largest senior citizens' group—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member from Parkdale-High Park has up to two minutes to respond.

1800

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, as to the comment about seeing an eye doctor, we can't because it's been delisted by the Liberal government. So there's another erosion of the health care system.

Also, he admitted that at least they can do more. I absolutely agree. They can do much more. That is exactly what we are saying over here. It costs \$55,000 a year to keep someone homeless on the streets, so it doesn't even make economic sense not to have housing in this budget. That was a study done in Vancouver recently.

As to the comments about Bob Rae's government and welfare, let me say that we increased welfare rates, so the member doesn't know his history. Suffice it to say that in the immortal words of the member from Welland, we over here hope that Bob Rae does for the federal Liberals what he did for the Ontario NDP. So there you go.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You all support him.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Absolutely. Just to conclude, this is not a laughing matter. There are children going to bed hungry in Ontario. One in five children lives in poverty. This is the reality, and this budget does not address that reality. There's absolutely nothing funny about that.

I would caution everyone in this House that when you bring forward something that purports to do something about poverty and does not, you condemn those children to continue living in poverty. This is absolutely unconscionable. We live in a time where action is desperately required, and we see no action on that file.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank the honourable member for Parkdale-High Park for her contribution to the debate.

It being past 6 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

Debate deemed adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Beaches–East York has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of Finance. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Finance when the recipients of ODSP and Ontario Works could expect the paltry 2% increase. I was mindful of the fact that in the last two budgets the increases were not given until the last half or the last quarter of the fiscal year. In 2007, the increase was given in November 2007. The minister confirmed that the 2% set out in the budget will not be paid until the second half of the fiscal year, likely in the fall of 2008. Then, bizarrely, he made the statement that welfare rates have risen by 27% in the past four years since the Liberals have been elected.

The reality is somewhat different. In the last four years, since the election of the Liberals, the 2004 budget set a 3% increase; the 2005 budget set 0%; 2006, 2%, which was only given in the last half of the year; and 2007, 2%, which was only given in the last quarter of the year. The people on ODSP and welfare are actually worse off today, when you factor in inflation, than they were when the Progressive Conservative government was defeated in 2003.

For greater certainty, I asked the library to confirm that the information I had was correct, and they wrote back to me this morning:

“To help social assistance recipients, the government is proposing to increase the basic adult allowance and maximum shelter allowance by 2% in 2008-09. This would provide Ontario Works and ODSP recipients with an additional \$36 million in income support in 2008-09 and an additional \$87 million in 2009-10.”

So you can see why this is being done: to save \$51 million. Then they went on to say:

“With the proposed increase”—that’s factoring in the 2%—“social assistance rates would have increased by a cumulative 9% since the government first took office in 2003.”

I studied and tried to figure out how the government and how the minister could have come to that conclusion. I looked at what a single Ontario Works case in 2007 receives as a current total: \$548 maximum benefit, and this will increase to \$560 maximum benefit.

I looked at a single disabled—this is on ODSP—which will go from \$979 to \$999. I had this confirmed as well by the department.

I went then to look at how he might possibly come to the 27%, and I am perplexed beyond belief. In the Ontario disability support program, singles are the overwhelming numbers of beneficiaries. There are

184,366 single people on ODSP. Couples amount to 33,850.

If you factor in those on ODSP with children, it is a scant 19,000. So of the 238,000, if there are any children’s benefits at all of the 238,000, less than 10% could potentially get more money.

I looked at Ontario social assistance, Ontario Works and although there are more children with sole-support parents, the majority of payments are made to singles and to couples with no children. Singles and couples with no children, under both of these factors, have been frozen at 7%.

There is no way, even if you want to include the 2%—which likely will not take place until the last quarter of this budget year—they are still at 7%, and I am perplexed. I want to know from the minister or from his parliamentary assistant where the figure of 27% was pulled. Out of thin air?

If it is from government programs that allow for people who go back to school to gain money, well, people who go back to school under any regime would get money. If it is because children are going to be fed in some of the schools, well, every child is fed in some of the schools. If it is some other bizarre program that every citizen of Ontario is entitled to, then let him say that. But to cavalierly stand there and state that people have got a 27% increase when it is clear from the government’s own records that that is not the case, and where 90% of the recipients have no children and are not eligible for other programs, is patently wrong.

I await the parliamentary assistant’s—I’m sure—learned explanation, trying to get out of this one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The member for Pickering–Scarborough East.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: A couple things: I think the minister was more than correct yesterday in many respects when he spoke: The implementation of this year’s increase to the social assistance rate wouldn’t be able to occur until the fall.

This is not a new situation. It’s the computer systems. They are complex and they can’t just readily plug in a couple of digits and kick out all of what has to happen. It would be nice if it would, but it doesn’t. Thus, the implementation will have to occur, as it has in the past, in the fall of this year rather than right away.

We traditionally speak to the issue of social assistance in the context of a family unit when the minister presents his budget or responds to questions. He doesn’t isolate his discussion into a single person either on Ontario Works or a single person on ODSP. He talks about that family unit, often of a single parent with two young children.

What does the composite activity mean in the context of changes to Ontario Works rates? The introduction of the Ontario child benefit: What does that mean to that family? The flow-through on the national child benefit: The increase has been flowing through to the family since 2003; issues such as the Ontario sales tax credit that accrues to that family as well.

So there are a number of elements to the composite annualized income capacity of that family unit. When one begins to assess each of those components and puts them all into place, what does this mean to this family? The numbers and the percentages that the minister spoke to are in that context: both the rate increases on each of those, I guess, four out of the five budget years; the introduction now of the Ontario child benefit and how that will roll out during the 2008-09 budget year after having gone through the down-payment phase, as it was referred to; the change in the rate system in the fall of this year; the national child benefit that accrues—the incremental portion accrues to that family; and other benefits of that nature. That doesn't go on at all to speak to what the budget includes in the context of addressing matters of poverty. Many of these families still find themselves in a situation where statistically they're still considered a family in poverty. Whether it's Minister Matthews, a cabinet committee, as we begin to work more thoroughly through that process, as we fully implement the child benefit, or the introduction of dental benefits to families on low and modest incomes, although not specific to the reference that the minister made, they're all part of a much broader package that we are putting in place for the benefit of those who find themselves in a situation that is one we would like to have all families out of, if we could achieve that.

The minister's comments were fully in that context, the full context of what it means to a family, often a single family, a single parent with small children: the increases in the specific rate; the flow-through of the additional child benefit; the implications of the centrepiece of our last budget, 2007-08, which was the Ontario child benefit—unique, I believe, in this country—that,

when fully rolled out, will provide some \$1,100, if I recall, by 2011 to families with children who meet the various thresholds for income. That includes not only those on social assistance but also speaks to those families who are working and trying to make it who find themselves able to be in the workforce as opposed to those who just can't be there for a variety of reasons. But we're working with them in the context of the minimum wage, which as of Monday will increase by 75 cents.

We heard the member speak during his speech and others across the floor about the need for increasing the minimum wage. We put in place a very strategic plan to do that prior to the election, and this budget was our first additional opportunity to move forward on that. So as of Monday, I believe it's March 31, we'll see the minimum wage go up. Those families who are working will also have increases there but will also be able to take advantage of the Ontario child benefit, which in the past was excluded from being able to support their children for many reasons that kept them out of the workforce. Now they have good reason to be in the workforce if they can be.

I believe the minister in his presentation was trying to reference that broader context, but particularly that family with two small children and what all of these things would mean to them in his commentary with respect to percentage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I thank both honourable members for their debate. There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. next Monday, March 31.

The House adjourned at 1813.

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Brownell, Jim (L)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Jaczek, Helena (L)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (L)	Brampton–Springdale	
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Welland	New Democratic Party House leader / leader parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
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Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (L)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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